

ROBERT BROWNING



Robert Browning.

THE POETICAL WORKS
OF
ROBERT BROWNING

WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS



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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
PIPPA PASSES	5
MY LAST DUCHESS	85
THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS	88
SAUL	126
"DE GUSTIBUS—"	150
WOMEN AND ROSES	152
THROUGH THE METIDJA TO ABD-EL-KADR	154
MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-GOTHA	156
BEFORE	165
AFTER	168
IN THREE DAYS	168
IN A YEAR	170
HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD	174
HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA	175
THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT ST. PRAXED'S CHURCH	176
CAVALIER TUNES	181
INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP	185
THE LOST LEADER	187
GARDEN-FANCIES	189
THE LABORATORY	196
THE CONFESSIONAL	199
EVELYN HOPE	203
A WOMAN'S LAST WORD	205
MY STAR	207
"CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK TOWER CAME"	208
THE STATUE AND THE BUST	220
OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE	231
BY THE FIRESIDE	245
TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA	257

	PAGE
EARTH'S IMMORTALITIES	260
A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON.	261
IN A GONDOLA	331
CRISTINA	341
PICTOR IGNOTUS	344
THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY	348
AN EPISTLE	353
RABBI BEN EZRA	366
LOVE AMONG THE RUINS	376
SONG	381
A LOVER'S QUARREL	382
FRA LIPPO LIPPI	389
ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND	407
A SERENADE AT THE VILLA	414
THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN	417
A PRETTY WOMAN.	429
A LIGHT WOMAN	433
LOVE IN A LIFE	436
LIFE IN A LOVE	437
THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER	438
THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL	443
"HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX"	446
A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S	450
MEMORABILIA	454
ANDREA DEL SARTO	455
CLEON	467
JAMES LEE'S WIFE.	482
ONE WAY OF LOVE	500
ANOTHER WAY OF LOVE	501
MISCONCEPTIONS	503
MAY AND DEATH	503
PROSPICE	505

PIPPA PASSES.

NEW YEAR'S DAY AT ASOLO IN THE
TREVISAN. — *A large, mean, airy,
chamber. A girl, PIPPA, from the silk-
mills, springing out of bed.*

DAY !

Faster and more fast,
O'er night's brim, day boils at last ;
Boils, pure gold, o'er the cloud-cup's brim
Where spurting and suppress it lay—
For not a froth-flake touched the rim
Of yonder gap in the solid gray
Of the eastern cloud, an hour away ;
But forth one wavelet, then another, curled,
Till the whole sunrise, not to be suppress,
Rose, reddened, and its seething breast
Flickered in bounds, grew gold, then over-
flowed the world.

Oh, Day, if I squander a wavelet of thee,
A mite of my twelve-hours' treasure,
The least of thy gazes or glances,
(Be they grants thou art bound to, or gifts
above measure)

One of thy choices, or one of thy chances,
(Be they tasks God imposed thee, or freaks
at thy pleasure)

—My Day, if I squander such labour or
leisure,

Then shame fall on Asolo, mischief on me !

Such stir about,—whom they expect from
Rome

To visit Asolo, his brothers' home,
And say here masses proper to release
A' soul from pain,—what storm dares hurt
his peace?

Calm would he pray, with his own thoughts
to ward

Thy thunder off, nor want the angels' guard!
But Pippa—just one such mischance would
spoil

Her day that lightens the next twelve-
month's toil

At wearisome silk-winding, coil on coil
And here I let time slip for nought!

Aha, you foolhardy sunbeam—caught

With a single splash from my ewer!

You that would mock the best pursuer

Was my basin over-deep?

One splash of water ruins you asleep,

And up, up, fleet your brilliant bits

Wheeling and counterwheeling,

Reeling, broken beyond healing—

Now grow together on the ceiling!

That will task your wits!

Whoever quenched fire first, hoped to see

Morsel after morsel flee

As merrily, as giddily . . .

Meantime, what lights my sunbeam on,

Where settles by degrees the radiant cripple?

Oh, is it surely blown, my martagon?

New-blown and ruddy as St. Agnes' nipple,
Plump as the flesh-bunch on some Turk
bird's poll !

Be sure if corals, branching 'neath the ripple
Of ocean, bud there,—fairies watch unroll
Such turban-flowers ; I say, such lamps
disperse

Thick red flame through that dusk green
universe !

I am queen of thee, floweret ;

And each fleshy blossom

Preserve I not—(safer

Than leaves that embower it,

Or shells that embosom)

—From weevil and chafer ?

Laugh through my pane, then ; solicit
the bee ;

Gibe him, be sure ; and, in midst of thy
glee,

Love thy queen, worship me !

—Worship whom else ? For am I not, this
day,

Whate'er I please ? What shall I please
to-day ?

My morning, noon, eve, night—how spend
my day ?

To-morrow I must be Pippa who winds
silk,

The whole year round, to earn just bread
and milk :

But, this one day, I have leave to go,
And play out my fancy's fullest games ;
I may fancy all day—and it shall be so—
That I taste of the pleasures, am called by
the names
Of the Happiest Four in our Asolo !

See ! Up the Hill-side yonder, through the
morning,
Some one shall love me, as the world calls
love :

I am no less than Ottima, take warning !
The gardens, and the great stone house
above,
And other house for shrubs, all glass in
front,
Are mine ; where Sebald steals, as he is
wont,

To court me, while old Luca yet reposes ;
And therefore, till the shrub-house door
uncloses,

I . . . what, now?—give abundant cause
for prate

About me—Ottima, I mean—of late,
Too bold, too confident she'll still face down
The spitefullest of talkers in our town—
How we talk in the little town below !
But love, love, love—there's better love, I
know !

This foolish love was only day's first offer ;
I choose my next love to defy the scoffer :

For do not our Bride and Bridegroom sally
Out of Possagno church at noon?
Their house looks over Orcana valley—
Why should I not be the bride as soon
As Ottima? For I saw, beside,
Arrive last night that little bride—
Saw, if you call it seeing her, one flash
Of the pale, snow-pure cheek and black
 bright tresses,
Blacker than all except the black eyelash;
I wonder she contrives those lids no dresses!
—So strict was she, the veil
Should cover close her pale
Pure cheeks—a bride to look at and scarce
 touch,
Scarce touch, remember, Jules!—for are
 not such
Used to be tended, flower-like, every feature,
As if one's breath would fray the lily of a
 creature?
A soft and easy life these ladies lead!
Whiteness in us were wonderful indeed—
 Oh, save that brow its virgin dimness,
 Keep that foot its lady primness,
 Let those ankles never swerve
 From their exquisite reserve,
 Yet have to trip along the streets like me,
 All but naked to the knee!
How will she ever grant her Jules a bliss
So startling as her real first infant kiss?
Oh, no—not envy, this!

—Not envy, sure!—for if you gave me
Leave to take or to refuse,
In earnest, do you think I'd choose
That sort of new love to enslave me?
Mine should have lapped me round from the
beginning
As little fear of losing it as winning!
Lovers grow cold, men learn to hate their
wives,
And only parents' love can last our lives:
At eve the son and mother, gentle pair,
Commune inside our Turret; what prevents
My being Luigi? while that mossy lair
Of lizards through the winter-time, is stirred
With each to each imparting sweet intents
For this new-year, as brooding bird to bird—
(For I observe of late, the evening walk
Of Luigi and his mother, always ends
Inside our ruined turret, where they talk,
Calmer than lovers, yet more kind than
friends)
Let me be cared about, kept out of harm,
And schemed for, safe in love as with a
charm;
Let me be Luigi! . . . If I only knew
What was my mother's face—my father,
too!

Nay, if you come to that, best love of all
Is God's; then why not have God's love
befall

Myself as, in the Palace by the Dome,
Monsignor?—who to-night will bless the
home

Of his dead brother ; and God will bless in
turn

That heart which beats, those eyes which
mildly burn

With love for all men : I, to-night at least,
Would be that holy and beloved priest !

Now wait !—even I already seem to share
In God's love : what does New-year's hymn
declare ?

What other meaning do these verses bear ?

*All service ranks the same with God :
If now, as formerly He trod
Paradise, His presence fills
Our earth, each only as God wills
Can work—God's puppets, best and worst,
Are we ; there is no last nor first.
Say not " a small event ! " Why " small " ?
Costs it more pain than this, ye call
A " great event," should come to pass,
Than that ? Untwine me from the mass
Of deeds which make up life, one deed
Power shall fall short in, or exceed !*

And more of it, and more of it !—oh, yes—
I will pass by, and see their happiness,
And envy none—being just as great, no
doubt,

Useful to men, and dear to God, as they !
 A pretty thing to care about
 So mightily, this single holiday !

But let the sun shine ! Wherefore repine ?
 —With thee to lead me, O Day of mine,
 Down the grass-path gray with dew,
 Under the pine-wood, blind with boughs,
 Where the swallow never flew
 As yet, nor cicale dared carouse—
 Dared carouse !

[*She enters the street.*]

I.—MORNING.

Up the Hill-side, inside the Shrub-house.
 LUCA'S Wife, OTTIMA, and her Paramour,
 the German SEBALD.

Seb. (sings).

*Let the watching lids wink !
 Day's a-blaze with eyes, think—
 Deep into the night, drink !*

Otti. Night ? Such may be your Rhine-
 land nights, perhaps ;
 But this blood-red beam through the shutter's
 chink,
 —We call such light, the morning's : let us
 see !
 Mind how you grope your way, though !
 How these tall

Naked geraniums straggle! Push the
lattice—

Behind that frame!—Nay, do I bid you?—
Sebald,

It shakes the dust down on me! Why, of
course

The slide-bolt catches.—Well, are you
content,

Or must I find you something else to spoil?

Kiss and be friends, my Sebald! Is it full
morning?

Oh, don't speak then!

Seb. Ay, thus it used to be!

Ever your house was, I remember, shut

Till mid-day—I observed that, as I strolled

On mornings thro' the vale here: country
girls

Were noisy, washing garments in the
brook—

Hinds drove the slow white oxen up the
hills—

But no, your house was mute, would ope no
eye—

And wisely—you were plotting one thing
there,

Nature, another outside: I looked up

Rough white wood shutters, rusty iron
bars,

Silent as death, blind in a flood of light;

Oh, I remember!—and the peasants laughed

And said, "The old man sleeps with the
young wife!"

This house was his, this chair, this window
—his!

Otti. Ah, the clear morning! I can see
St. Mark's:

That black streak is the belfry. Stop:
Vicenza

Should lie. . . There's Padua, plain enough,
that blue!

Look o'er my shoulder—follow my finger—

Seb. Morning?

It seems to me a night with a sun added:

Where's dew? where's freshness? That
bruised plant, I bruised

In getting thro' the lattice yestereve,

Droops as it did. See, here's my elbow's
mark

In the dust on the sill.

Otti. Oh shut the lattice, pray!

Seb. Let me lean out. I cannot scent
blood here,

Foul as the morn may be—

There, shut the world out!

How do you feel now, *Ottima*? There—
curse

The world, and all outside! Let us throw
off

This mask: how do you bear yourself?

Let's out

With all of it!

Otti. Best never speak of it.

Seb. Best speak again and yet again of it,
Till words cease to be more than words.

“His blood,”

For instance—let those two words mean

“His blood”

And nothing more. Notice—I’ll say them
now,

“His blood.”

Otti. Assuredly if I repented
The deed—

Seb. Repent? who should repent, or why?
What puts that in your head? Did I once
say

That I repented?

Otti. No—I said the deed—

Seb. “The deed,” and “the event”—just
now it was

“Our passion’s fruit”—the devil take such
cant!

Say, once and always, Luca was a wittol,
I am his cut-throat, you are—

Otti. Here is the wine—
I brought it when we left the house above—
And glasses too—wine of both sorts. Black?
white, then?

Seb. But am not I his cut-throat? What
are you?

Otti. There, trudges on his business from
the Duomo
Benet the Capuchin, with his brown hood

Under the green ascent of sycamores—
If we had come upon a thing like that
Suddenly—

Seb. “A thing” . . . there again—
“a thing!”

Otti. Then, Venus’ body, had we come
upon
My husband Luca Gaddi’s murdered corpse
Within there, at his couch-foot, covered
close—

Would you have pored upon it? Why persist
In poring now upon it? For ’tis here—
As much as there in the deserted house—
You cannot rid your eyes of it: for me,
Now he is dead I hate him worse—I hate—
Dare you stay here? I would go back and
hold

His two dead hands, and say, I hate you
worse

Luca, than—

Seb. Off, off; take your hands off mine!
’Tis the hot evening—off! oh, morning, is it?

Otti. There’s one thing must be done—
you know what thing.

Come in and help to carry. We may sleep
Anywhere in the whole wide house to-night.

Seb. What would come, think you, if we
let him lie

Just as he is? Let him lie there until
The angels take him: he is turned by this
Off from his face, beside, as you will see.

Otti. This dusty pane might serve for
looking-glass.

Three, four—four gray hairs! Is it so you
said

A plait of hair should wave across my neck?
No—this way!

Seb. Ottima, I would give your
neck,

Each splendid shoulder, both those breasts
of yours,

That this were undone! Killing?—Kill the
world

So Luca lives again!—Ay, lives to sputter
His fulsome dotage on you—yes, and feign
Surprise that I returned at eve to sup,
When all the morning I was loitering here—
Bid me dispatch my business and be gone.
I would—

Otti. See!

Seb. No, I'll finish! Do you think
I fear to speak the bare truth once for all?
All we have talked of is, at bottom, fine
To suffer—there's a recompense in guilt;
One must be venturous and fortunate—
What is one young for, else? In age we'll
sigh

O'er the wild, reckless, wicked days flown
over;

Still we have lived! The vice was in its
place.

But to have eaten Luca's bread, have worn.

His clothes, have felt his money swell my
purse—

Do lovers in romances sin that way?

Why, I was starving when I used to call
And teach you music—starving while you
plucked me

These flowers to smell!

Otti. My poor lost friend!

Seb. He gave me

Life—nothing less: what if he did reproach

My perfidy, and threaten, and do more—

Had he no right? What was to wonder at?

He sate by us at table quietly—

Why must you lean across till our cheeks
touch'd?

Could he do less than make pretence to
strike me?

'Tis not for the crime's sake—I'd commit ten
crimes

Greater, to have this crime wiped out—un-
done!

And you—O, how feel you? feel you for me?

Otti. Well, then—I love you better now
than ever—

And best (look at me while I speak to you)—

Best for the crime—nor do I grieve, in truth,

This mask, this simulated ignorance,

This affectation of simplicity,

Falls off our crime; this naked crime of ours

May not, now, be looked over—look it down,
then!

Great? let it be great—but the joys it brought,
Pay they or no its price? Come—they or it!
Speak not! The past, would you give up
the past

Such as it is, pleasure and crime together?
Give up that noon I owned my love for you—
The garden's silence—even the single bee
Persisting in his toil, suddenly stopt
And where he hid you only could surmise
By some campanula's chalice set a-swing
As he clung there—"Yes, I love you!"

Seb. And I drew
 Back ; put far back your face with both my
 hands
 Lest you should grow too full of me—your
 face
 So seemed athirst for my whole soul and
 body !

Otti. And when I ventured to receive you
here,
Made you steal hither in the mornings—

Seb. When
I used to look up 'neath the shrub-house here,
'Till the red fire on its glazed windows spread
To a yellow haze?

Otti. Ah—my sign was, the sun
Inflamed the sere side of yon chestnut-tree
Nipt by the first frost.

Seb. You would always laugh
At my wet boots—I had to stride thro' grass
Over my ankles.

Otti. Then our crowning night—

Seb. The July night?

Otti. The day of it too, Sebald !
When the heaven's pillars seemed o'erbowed
with heat,
Its black-blue canopy seemed let descend
Close on us both, to weigh down each to
each,
And smother up all life except our life.
So lay we till the storm came.

Seb. How it came !

Otti. Buried in woods we lay, you re-
collect ;
Swift ran the searching tempest overhead ;
And ever and anon some bright white shaft
Burnt thro' the pine-tree roof—here burnt
and there,
As if God's messenger thro' the close wood
screen
Plunged and replunged his weapon at a
venture,
Feeling for guilty thee and me : then broke
The thunder like a whole sea overhead—

Seb. Yes !

Otti.—While I stretched myself upon you,
hands
To hands, my mouth to your hot mouth, and
shook
All my locks loose, and covered you with
'them—
You, Sebald, the same you

Seb. Slower, Ottima—

Otti. And as we lay—

Seb. Less vehemently ! Love me—

Forgive me—take not words—mere words—
to heart—

Your breath is worse than wine ! Breathe
slow, speak slow—

Do not lean on me—

Otti. Sebald, as we lay,
Rising and falling only with our pants,
Who said, “ Let death come now—’tis right
to die !

Right to be punished—nought completes
such bliss

But woe ! ” Who said that ?

Seb. How did we ever rise ?
Was’t that we slept ? Why did it end ?

Otti. I felt you,
Fresh tapering to a point the ruffled
ends

Of my loose locks ’twixt both your humid
lips—

(My hair is fallen now, knot it again !)

Seb. I kiss you now, dear Ottima, now,
and now !

This way ? Will you forgive me—be once
more

My great queen ?

Otti. Bind it thrice about my brow ;
Crown me your queen, your spirit’s arbitress,
Magnificent in sin. Say that !

Those morbid, olive, faultless shoulder-blades—

I should have known there was no blood beneath !

Otti. You hate me, then ? You hate me then ?

Seb. To think

She would succeed in her absurd attempt,
And fascinate by sinning ; and show herself
Superior—Guilt from its excess, superior
To Innocence. That little peasant's voice
Has righted all again. Though I be lost,
I know which is the better, never fear,
Of vice or virtue, purity or lust,
Nature, or trick—I see what I have done,
Entirely now ! Oh, I am proud to feel
Such torments—let the world take credit
thence—

I, having done my deed, pay too its price !
I hate, hate—curse you ! God's in his
heaven !

Otti. —Me !

Me ! no, no, Sebald—not yourself—kill me !
Mine is the whole crime—do but kill me—
then

Yourself—then—presently—first hear me
speak—

I always meant to kill myself—wait, you !
Lean on my breast—not as a breast ; don't
love me

The more because you lean on me, my own

Heart's Sebald ! 'There—there—both deaths
presently !

Seb. My brain is drowned now — quite
drowned : all I feel

Is . . . is at swift-recurring intervals,
A hurrying-down within me, as of waters
Loosened to smother up some ghastly pit—
There they go—whirls from a black, fiery sea !

Otti. Not to me, God—to him be merciful !

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from
the Hillside to Orcana. Foreign Students
of Painting and Sculpture, from Venice,
assembled opposite the House of JULES,
a young French Statuary.*

1st Student. Attention ! my own post is
beneath this window, but the pomegranate
clump yonder will hide three or four of you
with a little squeezing, and Schramm and
his pipe must lie flat in the balcony. Four,
five—who's a defaulter. We want every-
body, for Jules must not be suffered to hurt
his bride when the jest's found out.

2nd Stud. All here ! Only our poet's
away—never having much meant to be
present, moonstrike him ! The airs of that
fellow, that Giovacchino ! He was in
violent love with himself, and had a fair
prospect of thriving in his suit, so un-
molested was it,—when suddenly a woman

falls in love with him, too; and out of pure jealousy he takes himself off to Trieste, immortal poem and all—whereto is this prophetic epitaph appended already, as Bluphocks assures me—“*Here a mammoth-poem lies,—Fouled to death by butterflies.*” His own fault, the simpleton! Instead of cramp couplets, each like a knife in your entrails, he should write, says Bluphocks, both classically and intelligibly.—*Æsculapius, an Epic. Catalogue of the drugs: Hebe’s plaister—One strip Cools your lip. Phœbus’ emulsion—One bottle Clears your throttle. Mercury’s bolus—One box Cures . . .*

3rd Stud. Subside, my fine fellow! If the marriage was over by ten o’clock, Jules will certainly be here in a minute with his bride.

2nd Stud. Good!—Only, so should the poet’s muse have been universally acceptable, says Bluphocks, *et canibus nostris . . .* and Delia not better known to our literary dogs than the boy—Giovacchino!

1st Stud. To the point, now. Where’s Gottlieb, the new-comer? Oh,—listen, Gottlieb, to what has called down this piece of friendly vengeance on Jules, of which we now assemble to witness the winding-up. We are all agreed, all in a tale, observe, when Jules shall burst out on us in a fury by and by: I am spokesman—the verses that

are to undeceive Jules bear my name of Lutwyche—but each professes himself alike insulted by this strutting stone-squarer, who came singly from Paris to Munich, and thence with a crowd of us to Venice and Possagno here, but proceeds in a day or two alone again—oh, alone, indubitably!—to Rome and Florence. He, forsooth, take up his portion with these dissolute, brutalised, heartless bunglers!—So he was heard to call us all: now, is Schramm brutalised, I should like to know? Am I heartless?

Gott. Why, somewhat heartless; for, suppose Jules a coxcomb as much as you choose, still, for this mere coxcombry, you will have brushed off—what do folks style it?—the bloom of his life. Is it too late to alter? These love-letters, now, you call his . . . I can't laugh at them.

4th Stud. Because you never read the sham letters of our inditing which drew forth these.

Gott. His discovery of the truth will 'be frightful.

4th Stud. That's the joke. But you should have joined us at the beginning: there's no doubt he loves the girl—loves a model he might hire by the hour!

Gott. See here! "He has been accustomed," he writes, "to have Canova's women about him, in stone, and the world's

women beside him, in flesh ; these being as much below, as those, above—his soul's aspiration : but now he is to have the real."

. . . There you laugh again ! I say, you wipe off the very dew of his youth.

1st Stud. Schramm ! (Take the pipe out of his mouth, somebody)—will Jules lose the bloom of his youth ?

Schramm. Nothing worth keeping is ever lost in this world ; look at a blossom—it drops presently, having done its service and lasted its time ; but fruits succeed, and where would be the blossom's place could it continue ? As well affirm that your eye is no longer in your body, because its earliest favourite, whatever it may have first loved to look on, is dead and done with—as that any affection is lost to the soul when its first object, whatever happened first to satisfy it, is superseded in due course. Keep but ever looking, whether with the body's eye or the mind's, and you will soon find something to look on ! Has a man done wondering at women ?—There follow men, dead and alive, to wonder at. Has he done wondering at men ?—There's God to wonder at : and the faculty of wonder may be, at the same time, old and tired enough with respect to its first object, and yet young and fresh sufficiently, so far as concerns its novel one. Thus . . .

1st Stud. Put Schramm's pipe into his

mouth again ! There, you see ! Well, this — Jules . . . a wretched fribble — oh, I watched his disportings at Possagno, the other day ! Canova's gallery—you know : there he marches first resolvedly past great works by the dozen without vouchsafing an eye : all at once he stops full at the *Psiche-fanciulla*—cannot pass that old acquaintance without a nod of encouragement—"In your new place, beauty ? Then behave yourself as well here as at Munich—I see you !" Next he posts himself deliberately before the unfinished *Pietà* for half an hour without moving, till up he starts of a sudden, and thrusts his very nose into—I say, into—the group ; by which gesture you are informed that precisely the sole point he had not fully mastered in Canova's practice was a certain method of using the drill in the articulation of the knee-joint—and that, likewise, has he mastered at length ! Good-bye, therefore, to poor Canova—whose gallery no longer need detain his successor Jules, the predestined novel thinker in marble !

5th Stud. Tell him about the women—go on to the women !

1st Stud. Why, on that matter he could never be supercilious enough. How should we be other (he said) than the poor devils you see, with those debasing habits we cherish ? He was not to wallow in that

mire, at least : he would wait, and love only at the proper time, and meanwhile put up with the *Psiche-fanciulla*. Now I happened to hear of a young Greek—real Greek—girl at Malamocco ; a true Islander, do you see, with Alciphron's "hair like sea-moss"—Schramm knows !—white and quiet as an apparition, and fourteen years old at farthest,—a daughter of Natalia, so she swears—that hag Natalia, who helps us to models at three *lire* an hour. We selected this girl for the heroine of our jest. So, first, Jules received a scented letter—somebody had seen his Tydeus at the academy, and my picture was nothing to it—a profound admirer bade him persevere—would make herself known to him ere long—(Paolina, my little friend of the *Fenice*, transcribes divinely). And in due time, the mysterious correspondent gave certain hints of her peculiar charms—the pale cheeks, the black hair—whatever, in short, had struck us in our Malamocca model : we retained her name, too—Phene, which is by interpretation, sea-eagle. Now, think of Jules finding himself distinguished from the herd of us by such a creature ! In his very first answer he proposed marrying his monitress : and fancy us over these letters, two, three times a day, to receive and despatch ! I concocted the main of it : relations were in the way—secrecy must be

observed—in fine, would he wed her on trust, and only speak to her when they were indissolubly united? St—st—Here they come!

6th Stud. Both of them! Heaven's love, speak softly! speak within yourselves!

5th Stud. Look at the bridegroom! Half his hair in storm, and half in calm,—patted down over the left temple,—like a frothy cup one blows on to cool it! and the same old blouse that he murders the marble in!

2nd Stud. Not a rich vest like yours, Hannibal Scratchy!—rich, that your face may the better set it off!

6th Stud. And the bride! Yes, sure enough, our Phene! Should you have known her in her clothes? How magnificently pale!

Gott. She does not also take it for earnest, I hope?

1st Stud. Oh, Natalia's concern, that is! We settle with Natalia.

6th Stud. She does not speak—has evidently let out no word. The only thing is, will she equally remember the rest of her lesson, and repeat correctly all those verses which are to break the secret to Jules?

Gott. How he gazes on her! Pity—pity!

1st Stud. They go in—now, silence! You three,—not nearer the window, mind,

I have spoken—speak, you !

—O, my life to come !

My Tydeus must be carved, that's there in
clay ;

Yet how be carved, with you about the
chamber ?

Where must I place you ? When I think
that once

This room-full of rough block-work seemed
my heaven

Without you ! Shall I ever work again—

Get fairly into my old ways again—

Bid each conception stand while, trait, by
trait,

My hand transfers its lineaments to stone ?

Will my mere fancies live near you, my
truth—

The live truth — passing and repassing
me—

Sitting beside me ?

Now speak !

Only, first,

See, all your letters ! Was't not well con-
trived ?

Their hiding-place is Psyche's robe ; she
keeps

Your letters next her skin : which drops out
foremost ?

Ah,—this that swam down like a first moon-
beam

Into my world !

From the drenched leaves o'erhead, nor
crowns cast off,
Violet and parsley crowns to trample on—
Sings, pausing as the patron-ghosts approve,
Devoutly their unconquerable hymn !
But you must say a "well" to that—say,
"well !"

Because you gaze—am I fantastic, sweet ?
Gaze like my very life's-stuff, marble—marbly
Even to the silence ! why before I found
The real flesh Phene, I inured myself
To see, throughout all nature, varied stuff
For better nature's birth by means of art :
With me, each substance tended to one form
Of beauty—to the human Archetype—
On every side occurred suggestive germs
Of that—the tree, the flower—or take the
fruit,—

Some rosy shape, continuing the peach,
Curved beewise o'er its bough ; as rosy
limbs,

Depending, nestled in the leaves—and just
From a cleft rose-peach the whole Dryad
sprang !

But of the stuffs one can be master of, .
How I divined their capabilities !
From the soft-rinded smoothening facile chalk
That yields your outline to the air's embrace,
Half-softened by a halo's pearly gloom ;
Down to the crisp imperious steel, so sure
To cut its one confided thought clean out

Of all the world : but marble !—'neath my
tools
More pliable than jelly—as it were
Some clear primordial creature dug from
depths
In the Earth's heart, where itself breeds itself,
And whence all baser substance may be
worked ;
Refine it off to air, you may—condense it
Down to the diamond ;—is not metal there,
When o'er the sudden specks my chisel trips ?
—Not flesh—as flake off flake I scale,
approach,
Lay bare those blueish veins of blood asleep ?
Lurks flame in no strange windings where,
surprised
By the swift implement sent home at once,
Flushes and glowings radiate and hover
About its track ?—

Phene ? what—why is this ?
That whitening cheek, those still-dilating
eyes !
Ah, you will die—I knew that you would
die !

PHENE *begins, on his having long remained
silent.*

Now the end's coming—to be sure, it must
Have ended sometime ! Tush—why need I
speak

Their foolish speech? I cannot bring to
mind

One half of it, besides ; and do not care
For old Natalia now, nor any of them.

Oh, you—what are you?—if I do not try
To say the words Natalia made me learn,
To please your friends,—it is to keep myself
Where your voice lifted me, by letting it
Proceed—but can it? Even you, perhaps,
Cannot take up, now you have once let fall,
The music's life, and me along with that—
No, or you would! We'll stay, then, as we
are

—Above the world.

You creature with the eyes!

If I could look for ever up to them,
As now you let me,—I believe, all sin,
All memory of wrong done or suffering
borne,

Would drop down, low and lower, to the
earth

Whence all that's low comes, and there
touch and stay

—Never to overtake the rest of me,
All that, unspotted, reaches up to you,
Drawn by those eyes! What rises is my-
self,

Not so the shame and suffering ; but they
sink,

Are left, I rise above them—Keep me so
Above the world!

But you sink, for your eyes
Are altering—altered! Stay—"I love you,
love you" . . .

I could prevent it if I understood
More of your words to me—was't in the tone
Or the words, your power?

Or stay—I will repeat
Their speech, if that contents you! Only,
change

No more, and I shall find it presently
—Far back here, in the brain yourself
filled up.

Natalia threatened me that harm would
follow

Unless I spoke their lesson to the end,
But harm to me, I thought she meant,
not you.

Your friends,—Natalia said they were your
friends

And meant you well,—because, I doubted it,
Observing (what was very strange to see)

On every face, so different in all else,
The same smile girls like us are used to bear,
But never men, men cannot stoop so low;
Yet your friends, speaking of you, used that
smile,

That hateful smirk of boundless self-conceit
Which seems to take possession of this
world

And make of God their tame confederate,
Purveyor to their appetites . . . you know!

But no—Natalia said they were your friends,
And they assented while they smiled the
more,

And all came round me,—that thin English-
man

With light, lank hair seemed leader of the
rest ;

He held a paper—"What we want," said he,
Ending some explanation to his friends—

"Is something slow, involved and mystical,
To hold Jules long in doubt, yet take his
taste

And lure him on so that, at innermost
Where he seeks sweetness' soul, he may
find—this !

—As in the apple's core, the noisome fly ;
For insects on the rind are seen at once,
And brushed aside as soon, but this is found
Only when on the lips or loathing tongue."
And so he read what I have got by heart—
I'll speak it,—“Do not die, love! I am
yours” . . .

Stop—is not that, or like that, part of words
Yourself began by speaking? Strange to
lose

What cost much pains to learn! Is this
more right?

*I am a painter who cannot paint ;
In my life, a devil rather than saint,
In my brain, as poor a creature too—
No end to all I cannot do!*

*Yet do one thing at least I can—
Love a man, or hate a man
Supremely : thus my love began.
Through the Valley of Love I went,
In its lovingest spot to abide,
And just on the verge where I pitched my tent,
I found Hate dwelling beside.
(Let the Bridegroom ask what the painter
meant,
Of his Bride, of the peerless Bride !)
And further, I traversed Hate's grove,
In its hatefullest nook to dwell ;
But lo, where I flung myself prone, couched
Love
Where the deepest shadow fell.
(The meaning—those black bride's-eyes above,
Not the painter's lip should tell !)*

“And here,” said he, “Jules probably will ask,
*You have black eyes, love,—you are, sure enough,
My peerless bride,—so do you tell, indeed,
What needs some explanation—what means this ?*”

—And I am to go on, without a word—
*So I grew wiser in Love and Hate,
From simple, that I was of late.
For once, when I loved, I would enlace
Breast, eyelids, hands, feet, form and face
Of her I loved, in one embrace—*

*As if by mere love I could love immensely!
And when I hated, I would plunge
My sword, and wipe with the first lunge
My foe's whole life out, like a sponge—
As if by mere hate I could hate intensely!
But now I am wiser, know better the fashion
How passion seeks aid from its opposite
passion,
And if I see cause to love more, or hate more
That ever man loved, ever hated, before—
And seek in the Valley of Love,
The spot, or the spot in Hate's Grove,
Where my soul may the sureliest reach
The essence, nought less, of each,
The Hate of all Hates, or the Love
Of all Loves, in its Valley or Grove,—
I find them the very warders
Each of the other's borders.
I love most, when Love is disguised
In Hate; and when Hate is surprised
In Love, then I hate most: ask
How Love smiles through Hate's iron casque,
Hate grins through Love's rose-braided
mask,—
And how, having hated thee,
I sought long and painfully
To wound thee, and not prick
The skin, but pierce to the quick,—
Ask this, my Jules, and be answered straight
By thy bride—how the painter Lutwyche can
hate!*

JULES *interposes*.

Lutwyche—who else? But all of them, no doubt,

Hated me: they at Venice—presently
Their turn, however! You I shall not meet:
If I dreamed, saying this would wake me!

Keep
What's here, this gold—we cannot meet
again,

Consider—and the money was but meant
For two years' travel, which is over now,
All chance, or hope, or care, or need of it!
This—and what comes from selling these,
my casts

And books, and medals, except . . . let them
go

Together, so the produce keeps you safe,
Out of Natalia's clutches!—If by chance
(For all's chance here) I should survive the
gang

At Venice, root out all fifteen of them,
We might meet somewhere, since the world
is wide—

*(From without is heard the voice of PIPPA,
singing—*

Give her but a least excuse to love me!

When—where—

*How—can this arm establish her above me,
If fortune fixed her as my lady there,
There already, to eternally reprove me?*

*("Hist"—said Kate the queen;
But "Oh—" cried the maiden, binding her
tresses,
"'Tis only a page that carols unseen
"Crumbling your hounds their messes?"")*

*Is she wronged?—To the rescue of her
honour,
My heart!
Is she poor?—What costs it to be styled a
donour?
Merely an earth's to cleave, a sea's to part!
But that fortune should have thrust all this
upon her!*

*("Nay, list,"—bade Kate the queen;
And still cried the maiden, binding her tresses,
"'Tis only a page that carols unseen
Fitting your hawks their jesses!"')*

(PIPPA passes.)

JULES resumes.

What name was that the little girl sang
forth?

Kate? The Cornaro, doubtless, who re-
nounced

The crown of Cyprus to be lady here
At Asolo, where still the peasants keep
Her memory; and songs tell how many a
page

Pined for the grace of one so far above



R.B.

Page 37.

"Was't not well contrived?
Their hiding-place is Psyche's robe."

His power of doing good to, as a queen—
“She never could be wronged, be poor,” he
sighed,
“For him to help her !”

Yes, a bitter thing
To see our lady above all need of us ;
Yet so we look ere we will love ; not I,
But the world looks so. If whoever loves
Must be, in some sort, god or worshipper,
The blessing or the blest one, queen or
page,
Why should we always choose the page's
part ?

Here is a woman with utter need of me,—
I find myself queen here, it seems !

How strange !
Look at the woman here with the new soul,
Like my own Psyche's,—fresh upon her lips
Alit, the visionary butterfly,
Waiting my word to enter and make bright,
Or flutter off and leave all blank as first.
This body had no soul before, but slept
Or stirred, was beauteous or ungainly, free
From taint or foul with stain, as outward
things

Fastened their image on its passiveness :
Now, it will wake, feel, live—or die again !
Shall to produce form out of unshaped stuff
Be art—and, further, to evoke a soul
From form, be nothing ? This new soul is
mine !

Now, to kill Lutwyche, what would that
do?—save

A wretched dauber, men will hoot to death
Without me, from their laughter!—Oh, to
hear

God's voice plain as I heard it first, before
They broke in with that laughter! I heard
them

Henceforth, not God!

To Ancona—Greece—some isle!

I wanted silence only—there is clay

Everywhere. One may do whate'er one likes
In Art—the only thing is, to make sure
That one does like it—which takes pains to
know.

Scatter all this, my Phene—this mad
dream!

Who—what is Lutwyche—what Natalia's
friends,

What the whole world except our love—my
own,

Own Phene? But I told you, did I not,
Ere night we travel for your land—some isle
With the sea's silence on it? Stand aside—
I do but break these paltry models up
To begin art afresh. Shall I meet Lutwyche,
And save him from my statue's meeting him?
Some unsuspected isle in the far seas!

Like a god going thro' his world there
stands

One mountain for a moment in the dusk,

Whole brotherhoods of cedars on its brow—
 And you are ever by me while I gaze
 —Are in my arms as now—as now—as now !
 Some unsuspected isle in the far seas !
 Some unsuspected isle in far off seas !

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from
 Orcana to the Turret. Two or three of
 the Austrian Police loitering with BLU-
 PHOCKS, an English vagabond, just in view
 of the Turret.*

*Bluphocks.*¹ So, that is your Pippa, the
 little girl who passed us singing? Well,
 your Bishop's Intendant's money shall be
 honestly earned:—now, don't make me that
 sour face because I bring the Bishop's
 name into the business—we know he can
 have nothing to do with such horrors—we
 know that he is a saint and all that a
 Bishop should be, who is a great man be-
 sides. *Oh! were but every worm a maggot,
 Every fly a grig, Every bough a Christmas
 faggot, Every tune a jig!* In fact, I have
 abjured all religions; but the last I inclined
 to, was the Armenian—for I have travelled,
 do you see, and at Koenigsberg, Prussia
 Improper (so styled because there's a sort
 of bleak hungry sun there), you might

¹ "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and
 sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

remark over a venerable house-porch, a certain Chaldee inscription; and brief as it is, a mere glance at it used absolutely to change the mood of every bearded passenger. In they turned, one and all; the young and lightsome, with no irreverent pause, the aged and decrepit, with a sensible alacrity,—'twas the Grand Rabbi's abode, in short. Struck with curiosity, I lost no time in learning Syriac—(these are vowels, you dogs,—follow my stick's end in the mud—*Celarent, Darri, Ferio!*) and one morning presented myself spelling-book in hand, a, b, c,—I picked it out letter by letter, and what was the purport of this miraculous posy? Some cherished legend of the past you'll say—"How Moses *hccus-pocust* Egypt's land with fly and locust,"—or, "How to Jonah sounded harshish, Get thee up and go to Tarshish,"—or, "How the angel meeting Balaam, Straight his ass returned a salaam;"—in nowise! "*Shackabrach—Boach—somebody or other—Isaach, Re-cei-ver, Pur-cha-ser and Ex-chan-ger of—Stolen goods!*" So talk to me of the religion of a bishop! I have renounced all bishops save Bishop Beveridge—mean to live so—and die—*As some Greek dog-sage, dead and merry, Hellward bound in Charon's wherry—With food for both world's under and upper, Lupine-seed and Hecate's supper, and never an obolus . . .* (Though

thanks to you, or this Intendant thro' you,
or this Bishop through his Intendant—I
possess a burning pocket-full of *swansigers*)
. . . *To pay the Stygian ferry!*

1st Pol. There is the girl, then; go and
deserve them the moment you have pointed
out to us Signor Luigi and his mother.
(*To the rest*) I have been noticing a house
yonder, this long while—not a shutter un-
closed since morning!

2nd Pol. Old Luca Gaddi's, that owns the
silk-mills here: he dozes by the hour—wakes
up, sighs deeply, says he should like to be
Prince Metternich, and then dozes again,
after having bidden young Sebald, the
foreigner, set his wife to playing draughts:
never molest such a household, they mean
well.

Blup. Only, cannot you tell me something
of this little Pippa, I must have to do
with?—one could make something of that
name. Pippa—that is, short for Felippa—
rhyming to—*Panurge consults Hertrippa—
Believ'st thou, King Agrippa?* Something
might be done with that name.

2nd Pol. Put into rhyme that your head
and a ripe musk-melon would not be dear
at half a *swanziger*! Leave this fooling,
and look out—the afternoon's over or
nearly so.

3rd Pol. Where in this passport of Signor

Luigi does our principal instruct you to watch him so narrowly? There? what's there beside a simple signature? (That English fool's busy watching.)

2nd Pol. Flourish all round—"put all possible obstacles in his way;" oblong dot at the end—"Detain him till further advices reach you;" scratch at bottom—"send him back on pretence of some informality in the above;" ink-spirt on right-hand side, (which is the case here)—"Arrest him at once." why and wherefore, I don't concern myself, but my instructions amount to this: if Signor Luigi leaves home to-night for Vienna, well and good—the passport deposited with us for our *visa* is really for his own use, they have misinformed the Office, and he means well; but let him stay over to-night—there has been the pretence we suspect—the accounts of his corresponding and holding intelligence with the Carbonari are correct—we arrest him at once—tomorrow comes Venice—and presently, Spielberg. Bluphocks makes the signal sure enough! That is he, entering the turret with his mother, no doubt.

III.—EVENING.

*Inside the Turret. LUIGI and his Mother
entering.*

Mother. If there blew wind, you'd hear a
long sigh, easing
The utmost heaviness of music's heart.

Luigi. Here in the archway?

Mother. Oh no, no—in farther,
Where the echo is made—on the ridge.

Luigi. Here surely, then.
How plain the tap of my heel as I leaped up!
Hark—"Lucius Junius!" The very ghost
of a voice,

Whose body is caught and kept by . . .
what are those?

Mere withered wall-flowers, waving over-
head?

They seem an elvish group with thin
bleached hair

Who lean out of their topmost fortress—
looking

And listening, mountain men, to what we
say,

Hands under chin of each grave earthy
face:

Up and show faces all of you!—"All of
you!"

That's the king's dwarf with the scarlet
comb: now hark—

Come down and meet your fate ! Hark—

“ *Meet your fate !* ”

Mother. Let him not meet it, my Luigi—
do not

Go to his City ! putting crime aside,
Half of these ills of Italy are feigned—
Your Pellicos and writers for effect,
Write for effect.

Luigi. Hush ! say A. writes, and B.

Mother These A's and B's write for
effect, I say.

Then, evil is in its nature loud, while good
Is silent—you hear each petty injury—
None of his daily virtues ; he is old,
Quiet, and kind, and densely stupid—why
Do A. and B. not kill him themselves ?

Luigi. They teach
Others to kill him—me—and, if I fail,
Others to succeed ; now, if A. tried and
failed

I could not teach that : mine's the lesser
task.

Mother, they visit night by night . . .

Mother. —You, Luigi ?
Ah, will you let me tell you what you are ?

Luigi. Why not ? Oh, the one thing you
fear to hint,

You may assure yourself I say and say
Ever to myself : at times—nay, even as now
We sit, I think my mind is touched—suspect
All is not sound : but is not knowing that,

What constitutes one sane or otherwise?
I know I am thus—so all is right again!
I laugh at myself as through the town
 I walk,
And see men merry as if no Italy
Were suffering; then I ponder—"I am rich,
Young, healthy; why should this fact
 trouble me,
More than it troubles these?" But it
 does trouble me!
No—trouble's a bad word—for as I walk
There's springing and melody and
 giddiness,
And old quaint turns and passages of my
 youth—
Dreams long forgotten, little in themselves—
Return to me—whatever may amuse me,
And earth seems in a truce with me, and
 heaven
Accords with me, all things suspend their
 strife,
The very cicalas laugh "There goes he, and
 there!
Feast him, the time is short—he is on his
 way
For the world's sake—feast him this once,
 our friend!"
And in return for all this, I can trip
Cheerfully up the scaffold-steps: I go
This evening, mother!

Mother.

But mistrust yourself—

Mistrust the judgment you pronounce on him.

Luigi. Oh, there I feel—am sure that I am right!

Mother. Mistrust^a your judgment, then, of the mere means

Of this wild enterprise: say you are right,—
How should one in your state e'er bring to pass

What would require a cool head, a cold heart,

And a calm hand? You never will escape.

Luigi. Escape—to even wish that, would spoil all!

The dying is best part of it. Too much
Have I enjoyed these fifteen years of mine,
To leave myself excuse for longer life—
Was not life pressed down, running o'er
with joy,

That I might finish with it ere my fellows
Who, sparerier feasted, make a longer stay?
I was put at the board-head, helped to all
At first; I rise up happy and content.
God must be glad one loves his world so
much—

I can give news of earth to all the dead
Who ask me:—last year's sunsets, and
great stars

That had a right to come first and see ebb
The crimson wave that drifts the sun
away—

Those crescent moons with notched and
burning rims
That strengthened into sharp fire, and there
stood,
Impatient of the azure—and that day
In March, a double rainbow stopped the
storm—
May's warm, slow, yellow moonlit summer
nights—
Gone are they, but I have them in my
soul!

Mother. (He will not go!)

Luigi. You smile at me!

'Tis true.—

Voluptuousness, grotesqueness, ghastliness,
Environ my devotedness as quaintly
As round about some antique altar wreath
The rose festoons, goats' horns, and oxen's
skulls.

Mother. See now: you reach the city—
you must cross
His threshold—how?

Luigi. Oh, that's if we conspired!
Then would come pains in plenty, as you
guess—

But guess not how the qualities required
For such an office—qualities I have—
Would little stead me otherwise employed,
Yet prove of rarest merit here—here only,
Every one knows for what his excellence
Will serve, but no one ever will consider

For what his worst defect might serve ; and
yet
Have you not seen me range our coppice
yonder
In search of a distorted ash ?—it happens
The wry spoilt branch's a natural perfect
bow !
Fancy the thrice-sage, thrice-precautioned
man
Arriving at the palace on my errand !
No, no—I have a handsome dress packed
up—
White satin here, to set off my black hair—
In I shall march—for you may watch your
life out
Behind thick walls—make friends there to
betray you ;
More than one man spoils everything.
March straight—
Only, no clumsy knife to fumble for—
Take the great gate, and walk (not
saunter) on
Thro' guards and guards——I have re-
hearsed it all
Inside the Turret here a hundred times—
Don't ask the way of whom you meet, observe,
But where they cluster thickliest is the door
Of doors ; they'll let you pass—they'll never
blab
Each to the other, he knows not the
favourite,

Whence he is bound and what's his business
now—

Walk in—straight up to him—you have no
knife—

Be prompt, how should he scream? Then,
out with you!

Italy, Italy, my Italy!

You're free, you're free! Oh mother, I
could dream

They got about me—Andrea from his exile,
Pier from his dungeon, Gaultier from his
grave!

Mother. Well, you shall go. Yet seems
this patriotism

The easiest virtue for a selfish man

To acquire! He loves himself—and next,
the world—

If he must love beyond, — but nought
between:

As a short-sighted man sees nought midway
His body and the sun above. But you

Are my adored Luigi—ever obedient

To my least wish, and running o'er with
love—

I could not call you cruel or unkind!

Once more, your ground for killing him!—
then go!

Luigi. Now do you ask me, or make
sport of me?

How first the Austrians got these pro-
vinces—

(If that is all, I'll satisfy you soon)
. . . Never by conquest but by cunning, for
That treaty whereby . . .

Mother. Well ?

Luigi. (Sure

he's arrived,
The tell-tale cuckoo—spring's his confidant,
And he lets out her April purposes !)
Or . . . better go at once to modern
times—
He has . . . they have . . . in fact, I under-
stand
But can't re-state the matter ; that's my
boast ;
Others could reason it out to you, and prove
Things they have made me feel.

Mother. Why go to-
night ?

Morn's for adventure. Jupiter is now
A morning star. I cannot hear you, Luigi !

Luigi. "I am the bright and morning-
star," God saith—

And, "to such an one I give the morning-
star !"

The gift of the morning-star—have I God's
gift

Of the morning-star ?

Mother. Chiara will love to see
That Jupiter an evening-star next June.

Luigi. True, mother. Well for those who
live through June !

Great noontides, thunder storms, all glaring
 Which triumph at the heels of sovereign
 June
 Leading his glorious revel thro' our world.
 Yes, Chiara will be here—

Mother. In June—re-
member,

Yourself appointed that month for her
 coming—

Luigi. Was that low noise the echo?

Mother. The
night-wind.

She must be grown—with her blue eyes
upturned

As if life were one long and sweet surprise :
In June she comes.

Luigi. We were to see together
The Titian at Treviso—there, again!

(From without is heard the voice of PIPPA, singing—

*A king lived long ago,
In the morning of the world,
When earth was nigher heaven than now :
And the king's locks curled
Disparting o'er a forehead full
As the milk-white space 'twixt horn and
horn
Of some sacrificial bull—
Only calm as a babe new-born :*

*For he was got to a sleepy mood,
 So safe from all decrepitude,
 From age with its bane, so sure gone by,
 (The Gods so loved him while he dreamed,)
 That, having lived thus long, there seemed
 No need the king should ever die.*

Luigi. No need that sort of king should
 ever die !

[*From without.*] *Among the rocks his city
 was :*

*Before his palace, in the sun,
 He sate to see his people pass,
 And judge them every one
 From its threshold of smooth stone.
 They haled him many a valley-thief
 Caught in the sheep-pens—robber-chief,
 Swarthy and shameless—beggar-cheat—
 Spy-prowler—or rough pirate found
 On the sea-sand left aground ;
 And sometimes clung about his feet,
 With bleeding lip and burning cheek,
 A woman, bitterest wrong-to speak
 Of one with sullen thickset brows :
 And sometimes from the prison-house
 The angry priests a pale wretch brought,
 Who through some chink had pushed and
 pressed,
 On knees and elbows, belly and breast,
 Worm-like into the temple,—caught*

*At last there by the very God
 Who ever in the darkness strode
 Backward and forward, keeping watch
 O'er his brazen bowls, such rogues to catch!
 And these, all and every one,
 The king judged, sitting in the sun.*

Luigi. That king should still judge sitting in
 the sun !

[*From without.*] *His councillors, on left and
 right,
 Looked anxious up,—but no surprise
 Disturbed the king's old smiling eyes,
 Where the very blue had turned to white.
 'Tis said, a Python scared one day
 The breathless city, till he came,
 With forked tongue and eyes on flame,
 Where the old king sate to judge alway;
 But when he saw the sweepy hair,
 Girt with a crown of berries rare
 Which the God will hardly give to wear
 To the maiden who singeth, dancing bare
 In the altar-smoke by the pine-torch lights,
 At his wondrous forest rites,—
 Beholding this, he did not dare,
 Approach that threshold in the sun,
 Assault the old king smiling there.
 Such grace had kings when the world begun!*
(PIPPA passes.)

Luigi. And such grace have they, now
that the world ends !

The Python in the city, on the throne,
And brave men, God would crown for
slaying him,

Lurks in bye-corners lest they fall his prey.
Are crowns yet to be won, in this late trial,
Which weakness makes me hesitate to
reach ?

'Tis God's voice calls, how could I stay ?
Farewell !

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from
the Turret to the Bishop's brother's House,
close to the Duomo S. Maria. Poor Girls
sitting on the steps.*

1st Girl. There goes a swallow to Venice
—the stout sea-farer !

Seeing those birds fly, makes one wish for
wings.

Let us all wish ; you, wish first !

2nd Girl. I ? This sunset
To finish.

3rd Girl. That old . . . somebody I
know,
Grayer and older than my grandfather,
To give me the same treat he gave last
week—

Feeding me on his knee with fig-peckers,

Lampreys, and red Breganze-wine, and
mumbling

The while some folly about how well I fare,
To be let eat my supper quietly—

Since had he not himself been late this
morning

Detained at—never mind where,—had he
not . . .

“Eh, baggage, had I not!”—

2nd Girl. How she can lie!

3rd Girl. Look there—by the nails—

2nd Girl. What makes your
fingers red?

3rd Girl. Dipping them into wine to write
bad words with,

On the bright table—how he laughed!

1st Girl. My turn:

Spring's come and summer's coming: I
would wear

A long loose gown—down to the feet and
hands—

With plaits here, close about the throat,
all day:

And all night lie, the cool long nights, in
bed—

And have new milk to drink—apples to eat,
Deuzans and junetings, leather-coats . . .

ah, I should say,

This is away in the fields—miles!

3rd Girl. Say at once

You'd be at home—she'd always be at home!

Now comes the story of the farm among
The cherry orchards, and how April snowed
White blossoms on her as she ran; why,
fool,

They've rubbed out the chalk-mark of how
tall you were,

Twisted your starling's neck, broken his
cage,

Made a dunghill of your garden—

1st Girl. They, destroy
My garden since I left them? well—perhaps!
I would have done so—so I hope they have!

A fig-tree curled out of our cottage wall—
They called it mine, I have forgotten why,
It must have been there long ere I was born;
Cric—cric—I think I hear the wasps o'erhead
Pricking the papers strung to flutter there
And keep off birds in fruit-time—coarse long
papers,

And the wasps eat them, prick them through
and through.

3rd Girl. How her mouth twitches!
Where was I?—before
She broke in with her wishes and long
gowns

And wasps—would I be such a fool!—Oh,
here!

This is my way—I answer every one
Who asks me why I make so much of him—
(If you say you love him—straight “he'll
not be gulled”)

"He that seduced me when I was a girl
Thus high—had eyes like yours, or hair like
yours,
Brown, red, white,"—as the case may be—
that pleases !

(See how that beetle burnishes in the
path—

There sparkles he along the dust ! and,
there—

Your journey to that maize-tuft's spoilt at
least !)

1st Girl. When I was young, they said
if you killed one

Of those sunshiny beetles, that his friend
Up there, would shine no more that day nor
next.

2nd Girl. When you were young ? Nor
are you young, that's true !

How your plump arms, that were, have
dropped away !

Why, I can span them ! Cecco beats you
still ?

No matter, so you keep your curious hair.

I wish they'd find a way to dye our hair

Your colour—any lighter tint, indeed,

Than black—the men say they are sick of
black,

Black eyes, black hair !

4th Girl. Sick of yours, like enough !

Do you pretend you ever tasted lampreys

And ortolans ? Giovita, of the palace,

tapers twist suddenly in two, each like a falling star, or sink down on themselves in a gore of wax. But go, my friends, but go! [*To the Intendant.*] Not you, Ugo! [*The others leave the apartment*] I have long wanted to converse with you, Ugo!

Inten. Uguccio—

Mon. . . . 'guccio Stefani, man! of Ascoli, Fermo, and Fossombruno;—what I do need instructing about, are these accounts of your administration of my poor brother's affairs. Ugh! I shall never get through a third part of your accounts: take some of these dainties before we attempt it, however: are you bashful to that degree? For me, a crust and water suffice.

Inten. Do you choose this especial night to question me?

Mon. This night, Ugo. You have managed my late brother's affairs since the death of our elder brother—fourteen years and a month, all but three days. On the 3rd of December, I find him . . .

Inten. If you have so intimate an acquaintance with your brother's affairs, you will be tender of turning so far back—they will hardly bear looking into, so far back.

Mon. Ay, ay, ugh, ugh, — nothing but disappointments here below! I remark a considerable payment made to yourself on this 3rd of December. Talk of disappoint-

ments! There was a young fellow here, Jules, a foreign sculptor, I did my utmost to advance, that the church might be a gainer by us both: he was going on hopefully enough, and of a sudden he notifies to me some marvellous change that has happened in his notions of art: here's his letter,—“He never had a clearly conceived Ideal within his brain till to-day. Yet since his hand could manage a chisel, he has practised expressing other men's Ideals—and, in the very perfection he has attained to, he foresees an ultimate failure—his unconscious hand will pursue its prescribed course of old years, and will reproduce with a fatal expertness the ancient types, let the novel one appear never so palpably to his spirit: there is but one method of escape—confiding the virgin type to as chaste a hand, he will turn painter instead of sculptor, and paint, not carve, its characteristics,”—strike out, I dare say, a school like Correggio: how think you, Ugo?

Inten. Is Correggio a painter?

Mon. Foolish Jules! and yet, after all, why foolish? He may—probably will, fail egregiously; but if there should arise a new painter, will it not be in some such way by a poet, now, or a musician (spirits who have conceived and perfected an Ideal through some other channel), transferring

it to his, and escaping our conventional roads by pure ignorance of them ; eh, Ugo ? If you have no appetite, talk at least, Ugo !

Inten. Sir, I can submit no longer to this course of yours : first, you select the group of which I formed one,—next you thin it gradually,—always retaining me with your smile, — and so do you proceed till you have fairly got me alone with you between four stone walls : and now then ? Let this farce, this chatter end now—what is it you want with me ?

Mon. Ugo . . .

Inten. From the instant you arrived, I felt your smile on me as you questioned me about this and the other article in those papers—why your brother should have given me this villa, that *podere*,—and your nod at the end meant,—what ?

Mon. Possibly that I wished for no loud talk here : if once you set me coughing, Ugo !—

Inten. I have your brother's hand and seal to all I possess : now ask me what for ! what service I did him—ask me !

Mon. I had better not.—I should rip up old disgraces—let out my poor brother's weaknesses. By the way, Maffeo of Forli (which, I forgot to observe, is your true name), was the interdict ever taken off you, for robbing that church at Cesena ?

Inten. No, nor needs be—for when I murdered your brother's friend, Pasquale, for him . . .

Mon. Ah, he employed you in that business, did he? Well, I must let you keep, as you say, this villa and that *podere*, for fear the world should find out my relations were of so indifferent a stamp! Maffeo, my family is the oldest in Messina, and century after century have my progenitors gone on polluting themselves with every wickedness under Heaven: my own father . . . rest his soul!—I have, I know, a chapel to support that it may rest: my dear two dead brothers were,—what you know tolerably well; I, the youngest, might have rivalled them in vice, if not in wealth, but from my boyhood I came out from among them, and so am not partaker of their plagues. My glory springs from another source; or if from this, by contrast only,—for I, the bishop, am the brother of your employers, Ugo. I hope to repair some of their wrong, however; so far as my brother's ill-gotten treasure reverts to me, I can stay the consequences of his crime; and not one *soldo* shall escape me. Maffeo, the sword we quiet men spurn away, you shrewd knaves pick up and commit murders with; what opportunities the virtuous forego, the villainous seize. Because, to

pleasure myself, apart from other considerations, my food would be millet-cake, my dress sackcloth, and my couch straw,—am I therefore to let you, the off-scouring of the earth, seduce the poor and ignorant, by appropriating a pomp these will be sure to think lessens the abominations so unaccountably and exclusively associated with it? Must I let villas and *podores* go to you, a murderer and thief, that you may beget by means of them other murderers and thieves? No . . . if my cough would but allow me to speak!

Inten. What am I to expect? You are going to punish me?

Mon. Must punish you, Maffeo. I cannot afford to cast away a chance. I have whole centuries of sin to redeem, and only a month or two of life to do it in! How should I dare to say . . .

Inten. "Forgive us our trespasses"—

Mon. My friend, it is because I avow myself a very worm, sinful beyond measure, that I reject a line of conduct you would applaud, perhaps: shall I proceed, as it were, a-pardoning?—I?—who have no symptom of reason to assume that aught less than my strenuousest efforts will keep myself out of mortal sin, much less, keep others out. No—I do trespass, but will not double that by allowing you to trespass.

Inten. And suppose the villas are not your brother's to give, nor yours to take? Oh, you are hasty enough just now!

Mon. 1, 2—No. 3!—ay, can you read the substance of a letter, No. 3, I have received from Rome? It is precisely on the ground there mentioned, of the suspicion I have that a certain child of my late elder brother, who would have succeeded to his estates, was murdered in infancy by you, Maffeo, at the instigation of my late brother—that the Pontiff enjoins on me not merely the bringing that Maffeo to condign punishment, but the taking all pains, as guardian of that infant's heritage for the Church, to recover it parcel by parcel, howsoever, whensoever, and wheresoever. While you are now gnawing those fingers, the police are engaged in sealing up your papers, Maffeo, and the mere raising my voice brings my people from the next room to dispose of yourself. But I want you to confess quietly, and save me raising my voice. Why, man, do I not know the old story? The heir between the succeeding heir, and that heir's ruffianly instrument, and their complot's effect, and the life of fear and bribes, and ominous smiling silence? Did you throttle or stab my brother's infant? Come, now!

Inten. So old a story, and tell it no better? When did such an instrument ever

produce such an effect? Either the child smiles in his face, or, most likely, he is not fool enough to put himself in the employer's power so thoroughly—the child is always ready to produce—as you say—howsoever, wheresoever, and whensoever.

Mon. Liar!

Inten. Strike me? Ah, so might a father chastise! I shall sleep soundly to-night at least, though the gallows await me to-morrow; for what a life did I lead! Carlo of Cesena reminds me of his connivance, every time I pay his annuity (which happens commonly thrice a year). If I remonstrate, he will confess all to the good bishop—you!

Mon. I see thro' the trick, caitiff! I would you spoke truth for once; all shall be sifted, however—seven times sifted.

Inten. And how my absurd riches encumbered me! I dared not lay claim to above half my possessions. Let me but once unbosom myself, glorify Heaven, and die!

Sir, you are no brutal, dastardly idiot like your brother I frightened to death—let us understand one another. Sir, I will make away with her for you—the girl—here close at hand; not the stupid obvious kind of killing; do not speak—know nothing of her or me! I see her every day—saw her this morning: of course there is to be no killing; but at Rome the courtesans perish

off every three years, and I can entice her thither—have, indeed, begun operations already. There's a certain lusty, blue-eyed, florid-complexioned, English knave I and the Police employ occasionally. — You assent, I perceive—no, that's not it—assent I do not say—but you will let me convert my present havings and holdings into cash, and give me time to cross the Alps? 'Tis but a little black-eyed, pretty singing Felippa, gay silk-winding girl. I have kept her out of harm's way up to this present; for I always intended to make your life a plague to you with her! 'Tis as well settled once and for ever: some women I have procured will pass Bluphocks, my handsome scoundrel, off for somebody; and once Pippa entangled!—you conceive? Through her singing? Is it a bargain?

*(From without is heard the voice of PIPPA,
singing—*

*Over-head the tree-tops meet—
Flowers and grass spring 'neath one's feet—
There was nought above me, and nought
below,
My childhood had not learned to know!
For, what are the voices of birds
—Ay, and of beasts,—but words—our words,
Only so much more sweet?*

*The knowledge of that with my life begun!
 But I had so near made out the sun,
 And counted your stars, the Seven and One,
 Like the fingers of my hand:
 Nay, I could all but understand
 Wherefore through heaven the white moon
 ranges;
 And just when out of her soft fifty changes
 No unfamiliar face might overlook me—
 Suddenly God took me! (PIPPA passes.)*

Mon. [*Springing up.*] My people—one
 and all—all—within there! Gag this villain
 —tie him hand and foot! He dares—I
 know not half he dares—but remove him
 quick! *Miserere mei, Domine!*—quick, I say!

PIPPA'S Chamber again. She enters it.

The bee with his comb,
 The mouse at her dray,
 The grub in its tomb,
 Wile winter away;
 But the fire-fly and hedge-shrew and lob-
 worm, I pray,
 How fare they?
 Ha, ha, best thanks for your counsel, my
 Zanze—
 “Feast upon lampreys, quaff the Bre-
 ganze”—
 The summer of life's so easy to spend,
 And care for to-morrow so soon put away!
 But winter hastens at summer's end,

And fire-fly, hedge-shrew, lob-worm, pray,
How fare they?
No bidding me then to . . . what did
she say?
“Pare your nails pearlwise, get your small
feet shoes
More like . . . (what said she?) — and
less like canoes—”
How pert that girl was!—would I be
those pert
Impudent staring women! it had done me,
However, surely no such mighty hurt
To learn his name who passed that jest
upon me:
No foreigner, that I can recollect,
Came, as she says, a month since, to
inspect
Our silk-mills—none with blue eyes and
thick rings
Of English-coloured hair, at all events.
Well—if old Luca keeps his good intents,
We shall do better: see what next year
brings!
I may buy shoes, my Zanze, not appear
More destitute than you, perhaps, next
year!
Bluph . . . something! I had caught the
uncouth name
But for Monsignor’s people’s sudden clatter
Above us—bound to spoil such idle chatter
As ours; it were, indeed, a serious matter

If silly talk like ours should put to shame
The pious man, the man devoid of blame,
The . . . ah, but—ah, but, all the same,
No mere mortal has a right
To carry that exalted air ;
Best people are not angels quite—
While—not the worst of people's doings scare
The devils ; so there's that proud look to spare !
Which is mere counsel to myself, mind ! for
I have just been the holy Monsignor !
And I was you too, Luigi's gentle mother,
And you too, Luigi !—how that Luigi started
Out of the Turret—doubtlessly departed
On some good errand or another,
For he past just now in a traveller's trim,
And the sullen company that prowled
About his path, I noticed, scowled
As if they had lost a prey in him.
And I was Jules the sculptor's bride,
And I was Ottima beside,
And now what am I ?—tired of fooling !
Day for folly, night for schooling !
New year's day is over and spent,
Ill or well, I must be content !
Even my lily's asleep, I vow :
Wake up—here's a friend I've pluckt you !
See—call this flower a heart's-ease now !
And something rare, let me instruct you,
Is this—with petals triply swollen,
Three times spotted, thrice the pollen.
While the leaves and parts that with ness

The old proportions and their fitness
Here remain, unchanged unmoved now—
So call this pampered thing improved now !
Suppose there's a king of the flowers
And a girl-show held in his bowers—
“ Look ye, buds, this growth of ours,”
Says he, “ Zanze from the Brenta,
I have made her gorge polenta
Till both cheeks are near as bouncing
As her . . . name there's no pronouncing !
See this heightened colour too—
For she swilled Breganze wine
Till her nose turned deep carmine—
'Twas but white when wild she grew !
And only by this Zanze's eyes
Of which we could not change the size,
The magnitude of what's achieved
Otherwise, may be perceived ! ”

Oh what a drear, dark close to my poor day !
How could that red sun drop in that black
cloud !

Ah, Pippa, morning's rule is moved away
Dispensed with, never more to be allowed,
Day's turn is over—now arrives the night's—
Oh, Lark, be day's apostle
To mavis, merle and throstle,
Bid them their betters jostle
From day and its delights !
But at night, brother Howlet, far over the
woods

Toll the world to thy chantry—
Sing to the bats' sleek sisterhoods
Full complines with gallantry—
Then, owls and bats, crows and twats,
Monks and nuns, in a cloister's moods,
Adjourn to the oak-stump pantry !

[After she has begun to undress herself.

Now, one thing I should like really to know :
How near I ever might approach all these
I only fancied being, this long day—
—Approach, I mean, so as to touch them—so
As to . . . in some way . . . move them—
if you please,

Do good or evil to them some slight way.
For instance, if I wind
Silk to-morrow, my silk may bind

[Sitting on the bedside.

And border Ottima's cloak's hem—
Ah, me and my important part with them,
This morning's hymn half promised when I
rose !

True in some sense or other, I suppose,
Though I passed by them all, and felt no sign.

[As she lies down.

God bless me ! I can pray no more to-night.
No doubt, some way or other, hymns say
right.

All service is the same with God—

*With God, whose puppets, best and worst,
Are we : there is no last nor first.—*

[She sleeps.

MY LAST DUCHESS.

FERRARA.

THAT's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive ; I call
That piece a wonder, now : Frà Pandolf's
hands

Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
" Frà Pandolf " by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they
durst,

How such a glance came there ; so, not the
first

Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas
not

Her husband's presence only, called that
spot

Of joy into the Duchess' cheek : perhaps
Frà Pandolf chanced to say " Her mantle
laps

" Over my Lady's wrist too much," or " Paint
" Must never hope to reproduce the faint

“Half-flush that dies along her throat ;” such stuff

Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart . . . how shall I say? . . . too
soon made glad,

Too easily impressed ; she liked whate’er
She looked on, and her looks went every-
where.

Sir, ’twas all one ! My favour at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace—all and
each

Would draw from her alike the approving
speech,

Or blush, at least. She thanked men—
good ; but thanked

Somehow . . . I know not how . . . as if
she ranked

My gift of a nine hundred years old name
With anybody’s gift. Who’d stoop to blame
This sort of trifling ? Even had you skill
In speech—(which I have not)—to make
your will

Quite clear to such an one, and say “Just
this

“Or that in you disgusts me ; here you miss,
“Or there exceed the mark”—and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set

Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made
excuse,
—E'en then would be some stooping, and I
chuse
Never to stoop. Oh, Sir, she smiled, no
doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed
without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave
commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There
she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll
meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your Master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
Together down, Sir! Notice Neptune, tho',
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze
for me.

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS.

I.

YOU'RE my friend :
I was the man the Duke spoke to ;
I helped the Duchess to cast off his yoke,
 too ;
So, here's the tale from beginning to end,
My friend !

II.

Ours is a great wild country :
If you climb to our castle's top,
I don't see where your eye can stop ;
For when you've passed the corn-field
 country,
Where vineyards leave off, flocks are packed,
And sheep-range leads to cattle-tract,
And cattle-tract to open-chase,
And open-chase to the very base
Of the mountain, where, at a funeral pace,
Round about, solemn and slow,
One by one, row after row,
Up and up the pine-trees go,
So, like black priests up, and so
Down the other side again
To another greater, wilder country,
That's one vast red drear burnt-up plain,
Branch'd thro' and thro' with many a vein

Whence iron's dug, and copper's dealt ;
Look right, look left, look straight before,—
Beneath they mine, above they smelt,
Copper-ore and iron-ore,
And forge and furnace mould and melt,
And so on, more and ever more,
Till, at the last, for a bounding belt,
Comes the salt sand hoar of the great sea
shore,
—And the whole is our Duke's country !

III.

I was born the day this present Duke
was—
(And O, says the song, ere I was old !)
In the castle where the other Duke was—
(When I was hopeful and young, not old !)
I in the Kennel, he in the Bower :
We are of like age to an hour.
My father was Huntsman in that day ;
Who has not heard my father say
That, when a boar was brought to bay,
Three times, four times out of five,
With his huntspear he'd contrive
To get the killing-place transfixed,
And pin him true, both eyes betwixt ?
And that's why the old Duke had rather
Have lost a salt-pit than my father,
And loved to have him ever in call ;
That's why my father stood in the hall

When the old Duke brought his infant out
To show the people, and while they passed
The wondrous bantling round about,
Was first to start at the outside blast
As the Kaiser's courier blew his horn,
Just a month after the babe was born.
"And" quoth the Kaiser's courier, "since
"The Duke has got an Heir, our Prince
"Needs the Duke's self at his side : "
The Duke looked down and seemed to wince,
But he thought of wars o'er the world wide,
Castles a-fire, men on their march,
The toppling tower, the crashing arch ;
And up he looked, and awhile he eyed
The row of crests and shields and banners,
Of all achievements after all manners,
And "ay," said the Duke with a surly pride.
The more was his comfort when he died
At next year's end, in a velvet suit,
With a gilt glove on his hand, and his foot
In a silken shoe for a leather boot,
Petticoated like a herald,
In a chamber next to an ante-room,
Where he breathed the breath of page and
groom,
What he called stink, and they, perfume :
—They should have set him on red Berold,
Mad with pride, like fire to manage !
They should have got his cheek fresh
tannage
Such a day as to-day in the merry sunshine !

Had they stuck on his fist a rough-foot
merlin !

(Hark, the wind's on the heath at its game !
Oh for a noble falcon-lanner
To flap each broad wing like a banner,
And turn in the wind, and dance like flame !)
Had they broached a cask of white beer from
Berlin !

—Or if you incline to prescribe mere wine—
Put to his lips when they saw him pine,
A cup of our own Moldavia fine,
Cotnar, for instance, green as May sorrel,
And ropy with sweet,—we shall not quarrel.

IV.

So, at home, the sick tall yellow Duchess
Was left with the infant in her clutches,
She being the daughter of God knows who :
And now was the time to revisit her tribe,
So, abroad and afar they went, the two,
And let our people rail and gibe
At the empty Hall and extinguished fire,
As loud as we liked, but ever in vain,
Till after long years we had our desire,
And back came the Duke and his mother
again.

V.

And he came back the pertest little ape
That ever affronted human shape ;

Full of his travel, struck at himself—
You'd say, he despised our bluff old ways
—Not he! For in Paris they told the elf
That our rough North land was the Land of
Lays,

The one good thing left in evil days;
Since the Mid-Age was the Heroic Time,
And only in wild nooks like ours
Could you taste of it yet as in its prime,
And see true castles, with proper towers,
Young-hearted women, old-minded men,
And manners now as manners were then.
So, all that the old Dukes had been, without
knowing it,

This Duke would fain know he was, without
being it;

'Twas not for the joy's self, but the joy of
his showing it,

Nor for the pride's self, but the pride of our
seeing it,

He revived all usages thoroughly worn-out,
The souls of them fumed-forth, the hearts of
them torn-out:

And chief in the chase his neck he perilled,
On a lathy horse, all legs and length,
With blood for bone, all speed, no strength;
—They should have set him on red Berold,
With the red eye slow consuming in fire,
And the thin stiff ear like an abbey spire!

VI.

Well, such as he was, he must marry, we
heard :

And out of a convent, at the word,
Came the Lady, in time of spring.
—Oh, old thoughts they cling, they cling !
That day, I know, with a dozen oaths
I clad myself in thick hunting-clothes
Fit for the chase of urox or buffle
In winter-time when you need to muffle ;
But the Duke had a mind we should cut a
figure,

And so we saw the Lady arrive :
My friend, I have seen a white crane bigger !
She was the smallest lady alive,
Made, in a piece of Nature's madness,
Too small, almost, for the life and gladness
That over-filled her, as some hive
Out of the bears' reach on the high trees
Is crowded with its safe merry bees :
In truth, she was not hard to please !
Up she looked, down she looked, round at
the mead,
Straight at the castle, that's best indeed
To look at from outside the walls :
As for us, styled the "serfs and thralls,"
She as much thanked me as if she had said it,
(With her eyes, do you understand ?)
Because I patted her horse while I led it ;
And Max, who rode on her other hand,

Said, no bird flew past but she enquired
What its true name was, nor ever seemed
tired—

If that was an eagle she saw hover,—
If the green and gray bird on the field was
the plover.

When suddenly appeared the Duke,
And as down she sprung, the small foot
pointed

On to my hand,—as with a rebuke,
And as if his backbone were not jointed,
The Duke stepped rather aside than forward,
And welcomed her with his grandest smile ;
And, mind you, his mother all the while
Chilled in the rear, like a wind to Nor'ward ;
And up, like a weary yawn, with its pullies
Went, in a shriek, the rusty portcullis ;
And, like a glad sky the north-wind sullies,
The Lady's face stopped its play,
As if her first hair had grown gray—
For such things must begin some one day!

VII.

In a day or two she was well again ;
As who should say, " You labour in vain !
" This is all a jest against God, who meant
" I should ever be, as I am, content
" And glad in his sight ; therefore, glad I
will be ! "

So, smiling as at first went she.

VIII.

She was active, stirring, all fire—
Could not rest, could not tire—
To a stone she had given life !
(I myself loved once, in my day),
—For a Shepherd's, Miner's, Huntsman's
 wife

(I had a wife, I know what I say),
Never in all the world such an one !
And here was plenty to be done,
And she that could do it, great or small,
She was to do nothing at all.
There was already this man in his post,
This in his station, and that in his office,
And the Duke's plan admitted a wife, at
 most,

To meet his eye, with the other trophies,
Now outside the Hall, now in it,
To sit thus, stand thus, see and be seen,
At the proper place in the proper minute,
And die away the life between.
And it was amusing enough, each infraction
Of rule (but for after-sadness that came)—
To hear the consummate self-satisfaction
With which the young Duke and the old
 Dame

Would let her advise, and criticise,
And, being a fool, instruct the wise,
And, child-like, parcel out praise or blame :
They bore it all in complacent guise,

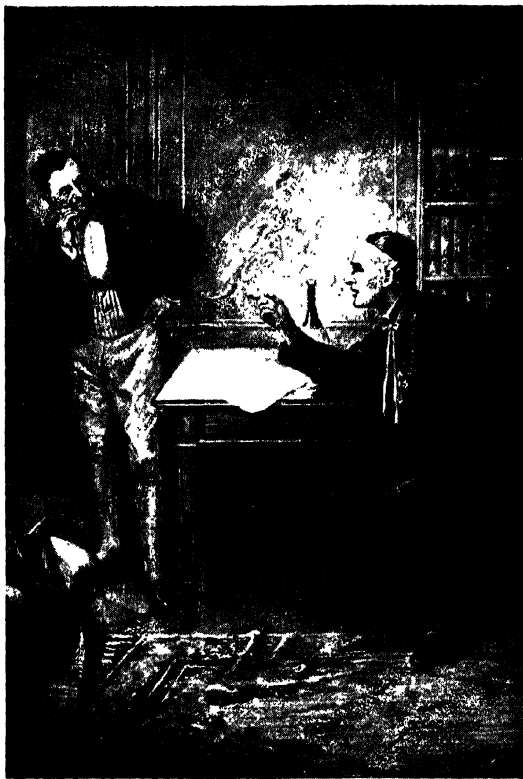
As tho' an artificer, after contriving
A wheel-work image as if it were living,
Should find with delight it could motion to
 strike him !
So found the Duke, and his mother like
 him,—
The Lady hardly got a rebuff—
That had not been contemptuous enough,
With his cursed smirk, as he nodded
 applause,
And kept off the old mother-cat's claws.

IX.

So, the little Lady grew silent and thin,
 Paling and ever paling,
As the way is with a hid chagrin ;
 And the Duke perceived that she was
 ailing,
And said in his heart, "'Tis done to spite
 me,
"But I shall find in my power to right me !"
Don't swear, friend—the Old One, many a
 year,
Is in Hell, and the Duke's self . . . you
 shall hear.

X.

Well, early in autumn, at first winter-
 warning,
When the stag had to break with his foot,
 of a morning,



"L.

L'age 77.

"The police are engaged in sealing up your papers, Maffeo"

A drinking-hole out of the fresh tender ice
That covered the pond till the sun, in a trice,
Loosening it, let out a ripple of gold,
And another, and another, and faster and
faster,

Till, dimpling to blindness, the wide water
rolled :

Then it so chanced that the Duke our master
Asked himself what were the pleasures in
season,

And found, since the calendar bade him be
hearty,

He should do the Middle Age no treason
In resolving on a hunting-party.

Always provided, old books showed the way
of it !

What meant old poets by their strictures ?

And when old poets had said their say of it,
How taught old painters in their pictures ?

We must revert to the proper channels,
Workings in tapestry, paintings on pannels,
And gather up Woodcraft's authentic tradi-
tions :

Here was food for our various ambitions,
As on each case, exactly stated,
—To encourage your dog, now, the properest
chirrup,

Or best prayer to St. Hubert on mounting
your stirrup—

We of the household took thought and
debated.

Blessed was he whose back ached with the
jerkin
His sire was wont to do forest-work in ;
Blesseder he who nobly sunk "ohs"
And "ahs" while he tugged on his grand-
sire's trunk-hose ;
What signified hats if they had no rims on,
Each slouching before and behind like the
scallop,
And able to serve at sea for a shallop,
Loaded with lacquer and looped with
crimson?
So that the deer now, to make a short
rhyme on't,
What with our Venerers, Prickers, and
Verderers,
Might hope for real hunters at length, and
not murderers,
And oh, the Duke's tailor—he had a hot
time on't !

XI.

Now you must know, that when the first
dizziness
Of flap-hats and buff-coats and jack-boots
subsided,
The Duke put this question, "The Duke's
part provided,
"Had not the Duchess some share in the
business?"

For out of the mouth of two or three
witnesses,

Did he establish all fit-or-unfitnesses :

And, after much laying of heads together,

Somebody's cap got a notable feather

By the announcement with proper unction

That he had discovered the lady's function ;

Since ancient authors held this tenet,

" When horns wind a mort and the deer is at
siege,

" Let the dame of the Castle prick forth on
her jennet,

" And with water to wash the hands of her
liege

" In a clean ewer with a fair toweling,

" Let her preside at the disemboweling."

Now, my friend, if you had so little religion

As to catch a hawk, some falcon-lanner,

And thrust her broad wings like a banner

Into a coop for a vulgar pigeon ;

And if day by day, and week by week,

You cut her claws, and sealed her eyes,

And clipped her wings, and tied her beak,

Would it cause you any great surprise

If when you decided to give her an airing

You found she needed a little preparing ?

—I say, should you be such a curmudgeon,

If she clung to the perch, as to take it in
dudgeon ?

Yet when the Duke to his lady signified,

Just a day before, as he judged most dignified,

In what a pleasure she was to participate,—
And, instead of leaping wide in flashes,
Her eyes just lifted their long lashes,
As if pressed by fatigue even he could not
 dissipate,
And duly acknowledged the Duke's fore-
 thought,
But spoke of her health, if her health were
 worth aught,
Of the weight by day and the watch by night,
And much wrong now that used to be right,
So, thanking him, declined the hunting.—
Was conduct ever more affronting?
With all the ceremony settled—
With the towel ready, and the sewer
Polishing up his oldest ewer,
And the jennet pitched upon, a piebald,
Black-barred, cream-coated and pink eye-
 ball'd,—
No wonder if the Duke was nettled!
And when she persisted nevertheless,—
Well, I suppose here's the time to confess
That there ran half round our Lady's chamber,
A balcony none of the hardest to clamber;
And that Jacynth the tire-woman, ready in
 waiting,
Stayed in call outside, what need of relating?
And since Jacynth was like a June rose, why,
 a fervent
Adorer of Jacynth, of course, was your
 servant;

And if she had the habit to peep through the
casement,
How could I keep at any vast distance?
And so, as I say, on the Lady's persistence,
The Duke, dumb stricken with amazement,
Stood for a while in a sultry smother,
And then, with a smile that partook of the
awful,
Turned her over to his yellow mother
To learn what was decorous and lawful;
And the mother smelt blood with a cat-like
instinct,
As her cheek quick whitened thro' all its
quince-tinct—
Oh, but the Lady heard the whole truth at
once!
What meant she?—Who was she?—Her
duty and station,
The wisdom of age and the folly of youth, at
once,
Its decent regard and its fitting relation—
In brief, my friend, set all the devils in hell
free
And turn them out to carouse in a belfry,
And treat the priests to a fifty-part canon,
And then you may guess how that tongue of
hers ran on!
Well, somehow or other it ended at last
And, licking her whiskers, out she passed;
And after her,—making (he hoped) a face
Like Emperor Nero or Sultan Saladin,

Stalked the Duke's self with the austere
 grace
Of ancient hero or modern paladin,—
From door to staircase—oh, such a solemn
Unbending of the vertebral column !

XII.

However, at sunrise our company mustered,
And here was the huntsman bidding unkennel,
And there 'neath his bonnet, the pricker
 blustered,
With feather dank as a bough of wet fennel ;
For the court-yard's four walls were filled
 with fog
You might cut as an axe chops a log.
Like so much wool for colour and bulkiness ;
And out rode the Duke in a perfect sulkiness,
Since before breakfast, a man feels but
 queasily,
And a sinking at the lower abdomen
Begins the day with indifferent omen :
And lo, as he looked around uneasily,
The sun ploughed the fog up and drove it
 asunder
This way and that from the valley under ;
And, looking thro' the court-yard arch,
Down in the valley, what should meet him
But a troop of Gypsies on their march,
No doubt with the annual gifts to greet
 him.

XIII.

Now, in your land, Gypsies reach you, only
After reaching all lands beside ;
North they go, south they go, trooping or
 lonely,
And still, as they travel far and wide,
Catch they and keep now a trace here, a
 trace there,
That puts you in mind of a place here, a
 place there :
But with us, I believe they rise out of the
 ground,
And nowhere else, I take it, are found .
With the earth-tint yet so freshly embrowned ;
Born, no doubt, like insects which breed on
The very fruit they are meant to feed on :
For the earth—not a use to which they don't
 turn it,
The ore that grows in the mountain's womb,
Or the sand in the pits like a honeycomb,
They sift and soften it, bake it and burn it—
Whether they weld you, for instance, a snaffle
With side-bars never a brute can baffle ;
Or a lock that's a puzzle of wards within
 wards ;
Or, if your colt's fore-foot inclines to curve
 inwards,
Horseshoes they'll hammer which turn on a
 swivel
And won't allow the hoof to shrivel ;

Then they cast bells like the shell of the
winkle,
That keep a stout heart in the ram with their
tinkle :
But the sand—they pinch and pound it like
otters ;
Commend me to Gypsy glass-makers and
potters !
Glasses they'll blow you, crystal-clear,
Where just a faint cloud of rose shall appear,
As if in pure water you dropped and let
die
A bruised black-blooded mulberry ;
And that other sort, their crowning pride,
With long white threads distinct inside,
Like the lake-flower's fibrous roots which
dangle
Loose such a length and never tangle,
Where the bold sword-lily cuts the clear
waters,
And the cup-lily couches with all the white
daughters :
Such are the works they put their hand to.
And the uses they turn and twist iron and
sand to.
And these made the troop which our Duke
saw sally
Towards his castle from out of the valley,
Men and women, like new-hatched spiders,
Come out with the morning to greet our
riders ;

And up they wound till they reached the
ditch,

Whereat all stopped save one, a witch,
That I knew, as she hobbled from the
group,

By her gait, directly, and her stoop,
I, whom Jacynth was used to importune
To let that same witch tell us our fortune.
The oldest Gypsy then above ground ;
And, so sure as the autumn season came
round,

She paid us a visit for profit or pastime,
And every time, as she swore, for the last
time.

And presently she was seen to sidle
Up to the Duke till she touched his bridle,
So that the horse of a sudden reared up
As under its nose the old witch peered up
With her worn-out eyes, or rather eyeholes
Of no use now but to gather brine,
And began a kind of level whine
Such as they used to sing to their viols
When their ditties they go grinding
Up and down with nobody minding :
And, then as of old, at the end of the
humming

Her usual presents were forthcoming
—A dog-whistle blowing the fiercest of
trebles

(Just as a sea-shore stone holding a dozen
fine pebbles),

Or a porcelain mouth-piece to screw on a
pipe-end,—

And so she awaited her annual stipend.

But this time, the Duke would scarcely
vouchsafe

A word in reply ; and in vain she felt

With twitching fingers at her belt

For the purse of sleek pine-martin pelt,

Ready to put what he gave in her pouch
safe,—

Till, either to quicken his apprehension,

Or possibly with an after-intention,

She was come, she said, to pay her duty

To the new Duchess, the youthful beauty.

No sooner had she named his Lady,

Then a shine lit up the face so shady,

And its smirk returned with a novel meaning—

For it struck him, the babe just wanted
weaning ;

If one gave her a taste of what life was and
sorrow,

She, foolish to-day, would be wiser to-
morrow ;

And who so fit a teacher of trouble

As this sordid crone bent well nigh double ?

So, glancing at her wolf-skin vesture

(If such it was, for they grow so hirsute

That their own fleece serves for natural fur
suit),

He was contrasting, 'twas plain from his
gesture,

The life of the lady so flower-like and delicate
With the loathsome squalor of this helicat.
I, in brief, was the man the Duke beckoned
From out of the throng, and while I drew
near

He told the crone, as I since have reckoned
By the way he bent and spoke into her ear
With circumspection and mystery,
The main of the Lady's history,
Her frowardness and ingratitude ;
And for all the crone's submissive attitude
I could see round her mouth the loose plaits
tightening,

And her brow with assenting intelligence
brightening,
As tho' she engaged with hearty good will
Whatever he now might enjoin to fulfil,
And promised the lady a thorough frightening.

And so, just giving her a glimpse
Of a purse, with the air of a man who
imps

The wing of the hawk that shall fetch the
hernshaw,

He bade me take the gypsy mother
And set her telling some story or other
Of hill or dale, oak-wood or fernshaw,
To while away a weary hour
For the Lady left alone in her bower,
Whose mind and body craved exertion
And yet shrank from all better diversion.

XIV.

Then clapping heel to his horse, the mere
 curvetter,
Out rode the Duke, and after his hollo
Horses and hounds swept, huntsman and
 servitor,
And back I turned and bade the crone follow.
And what makes me confident what's to be
 told you
Had all along been of this crone's devising,
Is, that, on looking round sharply, behold
 you,
There was a novelty quick as surprising :
For first, she had shot up a full head in
 stature,
And her step kept pace with mine nor
 faltered,
As if age had foregone its usurpature,
And the ignoble mien was wholly altered,
And the face looked quite of another nature,
And the change reached too, whatever the
 change meant,
Her shaggy wolf-skin cloak's arrangement,
For where its tatters hung loose like sedges,
Gold coins were glittering on the edges,
Like the band-roll strung with tomans
Which proves the veil a Persian woman's :
And under her brow, like a snail's horns
 newly
Come out as after the rain he paces,

Two unmistakable eye-points duly
Live and aware looked out of their places.
So we went and found Jacynth at the entry
Of the Lady's chamber standing sentry ;
I told the command and produced my
 companion,
And Jacynth rejoiced to admit any one,
For since last night, by the same token,
Not a single word had the Lady spoken :
So they went in both to the presence to-
 gether,
While I in the balcony watched the weather.

xv.

And now, what took place at the very first
 of all,
I cannot tell, as I never could learn it :
Jacynth constantly wished a curse to fall
On that little head of hers and burn it,
If she knew how she came to drop so soundly
Asleep of a sudden and there continue
The whole time sleeping as profoundly
As one of the boars my father would pin you
'Twixt the eyes where the life holds garrison,
—Jacynth forgive me the comparison !
But where I begin my own narration
Is a little after I took my station
To breathe the fresh air from the balcony,
And, having in those days a falcon eye,
To follow the hunt thro' the open country,

From where the bushes thinlier crested
The hillocks, to a plain where's not one
tree :—

When, in a moment, my ear was arrested
By—was it singing, or was it saying,
Or a strange musical instrument playing
In the chamber?—and to be certain
I pushed the lattice, pulled the curtain,
And there lay Jacynth asleep,
Yet as if a watch she tried to keep,
In a rosy sleep along the floor ,
With her head against the door ;
While in the midst, on the seat of state,
Like a Queen the Gypsy woman sate,
With head and face downbent
On the Lady's head and face intent,
For, coiled at her feet like a child at ease,
The Lady sate between her knees
And o'er them the Lady's clasped hands met,
And on those hands her chin was set,
And her upturned face met the face of the
crone

Wherein the eyes had grown and grown
As if she could double and quadruple
At pleasure the play of either pupil
—Very like by her hands slow fanning,
As up and down like a gor-crow's flappers
They moved to measure like bell clappers
—I said, is it blessing, is it banning,
Do they applaud you or burlesque you ?
Those hands and fingers with no flesh on ?

When, just as I thought to spring in to the
rescue,
At once I was stopped by the Lady's expres-
sion :
For it was life her eyes were drinking
From the crone's wide pair above unwink-
ing,
Life's pure fire received without shrinking,
Into the heart and breast whose heaving
Told you no single drop they were leaving—
Life, that filling her, past redundant
Into her very hair, back swerving
Over each shoulder, loose and abundant,
As her head thrown back showed the white
throat curving,
And the very tresses shared in the pleasure,
Moving to the mystic measure,
Bounding as the bosom bounded.
I stopped short, more and more confounded,
As still her cheeks burned and eyes glistened,
As she listened and she listened,—
When all at once a hand detained me,
And the selfsame contagion gained me,
And I kept time to the wondrous chime,
Making out words and prose and rhyme,
Till it seemed that the music furled
Its wings like a task fulfilled, and dropped
From under the words it first had propped,
And left them midway in the world,
And word took word as hand takes hand,
I could hear at last, and understand,

And when I held the unbroken thread,
The Gypsy said :—

“ And so at last we find my tribe,
And so I set thee in the midst,
And to one and all of them describe
What thou saidst and what thou didst,
Our long and terrible journey thro’,
And all thou art ready to say and do
In the trials that remain :
I trace them the vein and the other vein
That meet on thy brow and part again,
Making our rapid mystic mark ;
And I bid my people prove and probe
Each eye’s profound and glorious globe
Till they detect the kindred spark
In those depths so dear and dark,
Like the spots that snap, and burst, and flee,
Circling over the midnight sea.
And on that young round cheek of thine
I make them recognise the tinge,
As when of the costly scarlet wine
They drip so much as will impinge
And spread in a thinnest scale afloat
One thick gold drop from the olive’s coat
Over a silver plate whose sheen
Still thro’ the mixture shall be seen.
For, so I prove thee, to one and all,
Fit, when my people ope their breast,
To see the sign, and hear the call,
And take the vow, and stand the test
Which adds one more child to the rest—

When the breast is bare and the arms are
wide,
And the world is left outside.
For there is probation to decree,
And many and long must the trials be
Thou shalt victoriously endure,
If that brow is true and those eyes are sure :
Like a jewel-finder's fierce assay
Of the prize he dug from its mountain tomb,—
Let once the vindicating ray
Leap out amid the anxious gloom,
And steel and fire have done their part
And the prize falls on its finder's heart ;
So, trial after trial past,
Wilt thou fall at the very last
Breathless, half in trance
With the thrill of the great deliverance,
Into our arms for evermore ;
And thou shalt know, those arms once curled
About thee, what we knew before,
How love is the only good in the world.
Henceforth be loved as heart can love,
Or brain devise, or hand approve !
Stand up, look below,
It is our life at thy feet we throw
To step with into light and joy ;
Not a power of life but we'll employ
To satisfy thy nature's want ;
Art thou the tree that props the plant,
Or the climbing plant that seeks the tree—
Canst thou help us, must we help thee ?

If any two creatures grew into one,
They would do more than the world has done;
Tho' each apart were never so weak,
Yet vainly thro' the world should ye seek
For the knowledge and the might
Which in such union grew their right :
So, to approach, at least, that end,
And blend,—as much as may be, blend
Thee with us or us with thee,
As climbing-plant or propping-tree,
Shall some one deck thee, over and down,
Up and about, with blossoms and leaves ?
Fix his heart's fruit for thy garland crown,
Cling with his soul as the gourd-vine cleaves,
Die on thy boughs and disappear
While not a leaf of thine is sere ?
Or is the other fate in store,
And art thou fitted to adore,
To give thy wondrous self away,
And take a stronger nature's sway ?
I foresee and I could foretell
Thy future portion, sure and well—
But those passionate eyes speak true, speak
true,
And let them say what thou shalt do !
Only, be sure thy daily life,
In its peace, or in its strife,
Never shall be unobserved ;
We pursue thy whole career,
And hope for it, or doubt, or fear,—
Lo, hast thou kept thy path or swerved

We are beside thee, in all thy ways,
With our blame, with our praise,
Our shame to feel, our pride to show,
Glad, sorry—but indifferent, no !
Whether it is thy lot to go,
For the good of us all, where the haters meet
In the crowded city's horrible street ;
Or thou step alone thro' the morass
Where never sound yet was
Save the dry quick clap of the stork's bill,
For the air is still, and the water still,
When the blue breast of the dipping coot
Dives under, and all again is mute.
So at the last shall come old age,
Decrepit as befits that stage ;
How else wouldst thou retire apart
With the hoarded memories of thy heart,
And gather all to the very least
Of the fragments of life's earlier feast,
Let fall through eagerness to find
The crowning dainties yet behind ?
Ponder on the entire past
Laid together thus at last,
When the twilight helps to fuse
The first fresh, with the faded hues,
And the outline of the whole,
As round eve's shades their framework roll,
Grandly fronts for once thy soul :
And then as, 'mid the dark, a gleam
Of yet another morning breaks,
And like the hand which ends a dream,

Death, with the might of his sunbeam
Touches the flesh and the soul awakes,
Then—"

Ay, then, indeed, something would
happen!

But what? For here her voice changed like
a bird's;

There grew more of the music and less of
the words;

Had Jacynth only been by me to clap pen
To paper and put you down every syllable,
With those clever clerkly fingers,
All that I've forgotten as well as what lingers
In this old brain of mine that's but ill
able

To give you even this poor version
Of the speech I spoil, as it were, with
stammering

—More fault of those who had the hammering
Of prosody into me and syntax,

And did it, not with hobnails but tin-tacks!

But to return from this excursion,—

Just, do you mark, when the song was
sweetest,

The peace most deep and the charm com-
pletest,

There came, shall I say, a snap—

And the charm vanished!

And my sense returned, so strangely banished,

And, starting as from a nap,

I knew the crone was bewitching my lady,

With Jacynth asleep; and but one spring
 made I,
 Down from the casement, round to the
 portal,
 Another minute and I had entered,
 When the door opened, and more than
 mortal
 Stood, with a face where to my mind centred
 All beauties I ever saw or shall see,
 The Duchess—I stopped as if struck by
 palsy.
 She was so different, happy and beautiful,
 I felt at once that all was best,
 And that I had nothing to do, for the rest,
 But wait her commands, obey and be dutiful.
 Not that, in fact, there was any commanding,
 —I saw the glory of her eye,
 And the brow's height and the breast's
 expanding,
 And I was hers to live or to die.
 As for finding what she wanted,
 You know God Almighty granted
 Such little signs should serve his wild
 creatures
 To tell one another all their desires,
 So that each knows what its friend requires,
 And does its bidding without teachers.
 I preceded her; the crone
 Followed silent and alone;
 I spoke to her, but she merely jabbered
 In the old style; both her eyes had slunk

Back to their pits ; her stature shrunk ;
In short, the soul in its body sunk
Like a blade sent home to its scabbard.
We descended, I preceding ;
Crossed the court with nobody heeding ;
All the world was at the chase,
The court-yard like a desert-place,
The stable emptied of its small fry ;
I saddled myself the very palfrey
I remember patting while it carried her,
The day she arrived and the Duke married
her.

And, do you know, though it's easy deceiving
Oneself in such matters, I can't help believing
The lady had not forgotten it either,
And knew the poor devil so much beneath her
Would have been only too glad for her
service

To dance on hot ploughshares like a Turk
dervise,

But unable to pay proper duty where
owing it

Was reduced to that pitiful method of
showing it :

For though the moment I began setting
His saddle on my own nag of Berold's
begetting

(Not that I meant to be obtrusive),
She stopped me, while his rug was shifting,
By a single rapid finger's lifting,
And, with a gesture kind but conclusive,

And a little shake of the head, refused me,
I say, although she never used me,
Yet when she was mounted, the gypsy
 behind her,
And I ventured to remind her,
I suppose with a voice of less steadiness
Than usual, for my feeling exceeded me,
—Something to the effect that I was in
 readiness
Whenever God should please she needed
 me,—
Then, do you know, her face looked down
 on me
With a look that placed a crown on me,
And she felt in her bosom,—mark, her
 bosom—
And, as a flower-tree drops its blossom,
Dropped me—ah, had it been a purse
Of silver, my friend, or gold that's worse,
Why, you see, as soon as I found myself
So understood,—that a true heart so may
 gain
Such a reward,—I should have gone home
 again,
Kissed Jacynth, and soberly drowned myself !
It was a little plait of hair
Such as friends in a convent make
To wear, each for the other's sake,—
This, see, which at my breast I wear,
Ever did (rather to Jacynth's grudging),
And ever shall, till the Day of Judgment.

And then,—and then,—to cut short,—this
is idle,
These are feelings it is not good to foster,—
I pushed the gate wide, she shook the bridle,
And the palfrey bounded,—and so we lost
her!

XVI.

When the liquor's out, why clink the
cannakin?
I did think to describe you the panic in
The redoubtable breast of our master the
mannikin,
And what was the pitch of his mother's
yellowness,
How she turned as a shark to snap the
spare-rib
Clean off, sailors say, from a pearl-diving
Carib,
When she heard, what she called, the flight
of the feloness—
But it seems such child's play
What they said and did with the lady away!
And to dance on, when we've lost the music,
Always made me—and no doubt makes you
—sick.
Nay, to my mind, the world's face looked so
stern
As that sweet form disappeared thro' the
postern,
She that kept it in constant good humour,

It ought to have stopped ; there seemed
nothing to do more.

But the world thought otherwise and went
on,

And my head's one that its spite was spent
on :

Thirty years are fled since that morning,

And with them all my head's adorning.

Nor did the old Duchess die outright,

As you expect, of suppressed spite,

The natural end of every adder

Not suffered to empty its poison-bladder :

But she and her son agreed, I take it,

That no one should touch on the story to
wake it,

For the wound in the Duke's pride rankled
fiery,

So they made no search and small inquiry—

And when fresh gypsies have paid us a visit,
I've

Noticed the couple were never inquisitive,

But told them they're folks the Duke don't
want here,

And bade them make haste and cross the
frontier.

Brief, the Duchess was gone and the Duke
was glad of it,

And the old one was in the young one's
stead,

And took, in her place, the household's head,

And a blessed time the household had of it !

And were I not, as a man may say, cautious
How I trench, more than needs, on the
 nauseous,
I could favour you with sundry touches
Of the paint-smutches with which the
 Duchess
Heightened the mellowness of her cheek's
 yellowness
(To get on faster) until at last her
Cheek grew to be one master-plaster
Of mucus and fucus from mere use of ceruse :
Till in short she grew from scalp to udder
Just an object to make you shudder !

XVII.

You're my friend—
What a thing friendship is, world without
 end !
How it gives the heart and soul a stir-up,
As if somebody broached you a glorious
 runlet,
And poured out all lovelily, sparkling, and
 sunlit,
Our green Moldavia, the streaky syrup,
Cotnar as old as the time of the Druids—
Friendship's as good as that monarch of
 fluids
To supple a dry brain, fill you its ins-and-
 outs,—
Gives your Life's hour-glass a shake when
 the thin sand doubts

Whether to run on or stop short, and
guarantees

Age is not all made of stark sloth and arrant
ease !

I have seen my little Lady once more,
Jacynth, the Gypsy, Berold, and the rest
of it,

For to me spoke the Duke, as I told you
before ;

I always wanted to make a clean breast
of it,

And now it is made—why, my heart's-blood,
that went trickle,

Trickle, but anon, in such muddy dribblets,
Is pumped up brisk now, thro' the main
ventricle,

And genially floats me about the giblets !

I'll tell you what I intend to do :

I must see this fellow his sad life thro'

—He is our Duke after all,

And I, as he says, but a serf and thrall ;

My father was born here and I inherit

His fame, a chain he bound his son
with,—

Could I pay in a lump I should prefer it,

But there's no mine to blow up and get
done with,

So I must stay till the end of the chapter :

For, as to our middle-age-manners-adapter,

Be it a thing to be glad on or sorry on,

One day or other, his head in a morion,

And breast in a hauberk, his heels he'll kick
up
Slain by some onslaught fierce of hiccup.
And then, when red doth the sword of our
Duke rust,
And its leathern sheath lies o'ergrown with
a blue crust,
Then, I shall scrape together my earnings ;
For, you see, in the Churchyard Jacynth
reposes,
And our children all went the way of the
roses—
It's a long lane that knows no turnings—
One needs but little tackle to travel in,
So, just one stout cloak shall I indue,
And for a staff, what beats the javelin
With which his boars my father pinned
you?
And then, for a purpose you shall hear
presently,
Taking some Cotnar, a tight plump skinfull,
I shall go journeying, who but I, pleasantly?
Sorrow in vain and despondency sinful.
What's a man's age? He must hurry more,
that's all ;
Cram in a day, what his youth took a year
to hold ;
When we mind labour, then only, we're
too old—
What age had Methusalem when he begat
Saul?

And at last, as its haven some buffeted ship
sees,

(Come all the way from the north-parts with
sperm oil)

I shall get safely out of the turmoil
And arrive one day at the land of the gypsies
And find my lady, or hear the last news
of her

From some old thief and son of Lucifer,
His forehead chapletted green with wreathy
hop,

Sunburned all over like an Æthiop :

And when my Cotnar begins to operate .

And the tongue of the rogue to run at a
proper rate,

And our wine-skin, tight once, shows each
flaccid dent, .

I shall drop in with—as if by accident—

“ You never knew then, how it all ended,

“ What fortunes good or bad attended

“ The little lady your Queen befriended ? ”

—And when that's told me, what's re-
maining ?

This world's too hard for my explaining—

The same wise judge of matters equine

Who still preferred some slim four-year-old

To the big-boned stock of mighty Berold,

And for strong Cotnar drank French weak
wine,

He also must be such a Lady's scorner

Smooth Jacob still robs homely Esau,

Now up, now down, the world's one see-
saw

—So, I shall find out some snug corner
Under a hedge, like Orson the wood-knight,
Turn myself round and bid the world good-
night ;

And sleep a sound sleep till the trumpet's
blowing

Wakes me (unless priests cheat us laymen)
To a world where's to be no further throwing
Pearls before swine that can't value them.

Amen !

SAUL.

I.

SAID Abner, " At last thou art come ! Ere
I tell, ere thou speak,

Kiss my cheek, wish me well ! " Then I
wished it, and did kiss his cheek.

And he, " Since the King, O my friend, for
thy countenance sent,

Neither drunken or eaten have we ; nor until
from his tent

Thou return with the joyful assurance the
King liveth yet,

Shall our lip with the honey be bright, with
the water be wet.

For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a
space of three days,
Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants,
of prayer or of praise,
To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have
ended their strife,
And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch
sinks back upon life.

II.

Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved ! God's
child with his dew
On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies
still living and blue
Just broken to twine round thy harp-strings,
as if no wild heat
Were now raging to torture the desert ! ”

III.

Then I, as was meet,
Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and
rose on my feet,
And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The
tent was unlooped ;
I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and
under I stooped ;
Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch,
all withered and gone,
That extends to the second enclosure, I
groped my way on

Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open.
Then once more I prayed,
And opened the foldskirts and entered, and
was not afraid,
But spoke, "Here is David, thy servant!"
And no voice replied.
At the first I saw nought but the blackness;
but soon I descried
A something more black than the blackness
—the vast, the upright
Main prop which sustains the pavilion: and
slow into sight
Grew a figure against it, gigantic and
blackest of all;—
Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent-
roof,—showed Saul.

IV.

He stood as erect as that tent-prop; both
arms stretched out wide
On the great cross-support in the centre,
that goes to each side:
He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there,—
as, caught in his pangs
And waiting his change the king-serpent all
heavily hangs,
Far away from his kind, in the pine, till
deliverance come
With the spring-time,—so agonised Saul,
drear and stark, blind and dumb.



V.

Then I tuned my harp,—took off the lilies
we twine round its chords
Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noon-
tide—those sunbeams like swords !
And I first played the tune all our sheep
know, as, one after one,
So docile they come to the pen-door, till
folding be done.
They are white and untorn by the bushes,
for lo, they have fed
Where the long grasses stifle the water
within the stream's bed ;
And now one after one seeks its lodgings,
as star follows star
Into eve and the blue far above us,—so blue
and so far !

VI.

—Then the tune, for which quails on the
cornland will each leave his mate
To fly after the player ; then, what makes
the crickets elate,
Till for boldness they fight one another : and
then, what has weight
To set the quick jerboa a-musing outside his
sand house—
There are none such as he for a wonder, half
bird and half mouse !—

God made all the creatures and gave them
our love and our fear,
To give sign, we and they are his children,
one family here.

VII.

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers,
their wine-song, when hand
Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good
friendship, and great hearts expand
And grow one in the sense of this world's
life—And then, the last song
When the dead man is praised on his journey
—"Bear, bear him along
With his few faults shut up like dead
flowerets ! are balm-seeds not here
To console us ? The land has none left,
such as he on the bier.
Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother !"
—And then, the glad chaunt
Of the marriage,—first go the young maidens,
next, she whom we vaunt
As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling.—
And then, the great march
Wherein man runs to man to assist him and
buttress an arch
Nought can break ; who shall harm them, our
friends ?—Then, the chorus intoned
As the Levites go up to the altar in glory
enthroned . . .
But I stopped here—for here in the darkness,
Saul groaned.

VIII.

And I paused, held my breath in such silence,
and listened apart ;
And the tent shook, for mighty Saul
shuddered,—and sparkles 'gan dart
From the jewels that woke in his turban at
once with a start—
All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies
courageous at heart.
So the head—but the body still moved not,
still hung there erect.
And I bent once again to my playing, pursued
it unchecked,
As I sang,—

IX.

“ Oh, our manhood's prime
vigour ! no spirit feels waste,
Not a muscle is stopped in its playing, nor
sinew unbraced.
Oh, the wild joys of living ! the leaping from
rock up to rock—
The strong rending of boughs from the fir-
tree,—the cool silver shock
Of the plunge in a pool's living water,—the
hunt of the bear,
And the sultriness showing the lion is couched
in his lair.
And the meal—the rich dates—yellowed over
with gold dust divine,
And the locust's-flesh steeped in the pitcher ,
the full draught of wine,

And the sleep in the dried river-channel
where bulrushes tell
That the water was wont to go warbling so
softly and well.
How good is man's life, the mere living!
how fit to employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses,
for ever in joy!
Hast thou loved the white locks of thy
father, whose sword thou didst guard
When he trusted thee forth with the armies,
for glorious reward?
Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother,
held up as men sung
The low song of the nearly-departed, and
heard her faint tongue
Joining in while it could to the witness,
'Let one more attest,
I have lived, seen God's hand thro' a life-
time, and all was for best? . . .'
Then they sung thro' their tears in strong
triumph, not much,—but the rest.
And thy brothers, the help and the contest,
the working whence grew
Such result as, from seething grape-bundles,
the spirit strained true!
And the friends of thy boyhood—that boy-
hood of wonder and hope,
Present promise, and wealth of the future
beyond the eye's scope—

Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch; a
 people is thine;
 And all gifts which the world offers singly,
 on one head combine!
 On one head, all the beauty and strength,
 love and rage, like the throe
 That, a-work in the rock, helps its labour,
 and lets the gold go:
 High ambition and deeds which surpass it,
 fame crowning it,—all
 Brought to blaze on the head of one creature
 —King Saul!”

X.

And lo, with that leap of my spirit, heart,
 hand, harp and voice,
 Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow, each
 bidding rejoice
 Saul's fame in the light it was made for—as
 when, dare I say,
 The Lord's army in rapture of service, strains
 through his array,
 And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot —
 “Saul!” cried I, and stopped,
 And waited the thing that should follow.
 Then Saul, who hung propt
 By the tent's crosss-upport in the centre,
 was struck by his name.
 Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy sum-
 mons goes right to the aim,

And some mountain, the last to withstand
her, that held (he alone,
While the vale laughed in freedom and
flowers) on a broad bust of stone
A year's snow bound about for a breastplate,
—leaves grasp of the sheet?
Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunder-
ously down to his feet,
And there fronts you, stark, black but alive
yet, your mountain of old,
With his rents, the successive bequeathings
of ages untold—
Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles,
each furrow and scar
Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the
tempest—all hail, there they are!
Now again to be softened with verdure,
again hold the nest
Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young
to the green on its crest
For their food in the ardours of summer!
One long shudder thrilled
All the tent till the very air tingled, then
sank and was stilled,
At the King's self left standing before me,
released and aware.
What was gone, what remained? all to
traverse 'twixt hope and despair—
Death was past, life not come—so he waited.
Awhile his right hand
Held the brow, helped the eyes left too
vacant forthwith to remand

To their place what new objects should
enter ; 'twas Saul as before.
I looked up and dared gaze at those eyes,
nor was hurt any more
Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn, ye
watch from the shore
At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean—a
sun's slow decline
Over hills which, resolved in stern silence,
o'erlap and entwine
Base with base to knit strength more in-
tense : so, arm folded in arm
O'er the chest whose slow heavings sub-
sided

XI.

What spell or what charm,
(For, awhile there was trouble within me)
what next should I urge
To sustain him where song had restored
him?—Song filled to the verge
His cup with the wine of this life, pressing
all that it yields
Of mere fruitage, the strength and the
beauty ! Beyond, on what fields,
Glean a vintage more potent and perfect to
brighten the eye
And bring blood to the lip, and commend
them the cup they put by?
He saith, " It is good ; " still he drinks not
—he lets me praise life,
Gives assent, yet would die for his own part.

XII.

Then fancies grew rite
Which had come long ago on the pastures,
when round me the sheep
Fed in silence—above, the one eagle wheeled
slow as in sleep,
And I lay in my hollow, and mused on the
world that might lie
'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip
'twixt the hill and the sky :
And I laughed—"Since my days are ordained
to be passed with my flocks,
Let me people at least with my fancies, the
plains and the rocks,
Dream the life I am never to mix with, and
image the show
Of mankind as they live in those fashions I
hardly shall know !
Schemes of life, its best rules and right
uses, the courage that gains,
And the prudence that keeps what men
strive for." And now these old trains
Of vague thought came again ; I grew
surer ; so once more the string
Of my harp made response to my spirit, as
thus—

XIII.

"Yea, my King,"
I began—"thou dost well in rejecting mere
comforts that spring

From the mere mortal life held in common
by man and by brute :
In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in
our soul it bears fruit.
Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree,—
how its stem trembled first
Till it passed the kid's lip, the stag's antler ;
then safely outburst
The fan-branches all round ; and thou
mindedst when these too, in turn
Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed
perfect : yet more was to learn,
Ev'n the good that comes in with the palm-
fruit. Our dates shall we slight,
When their juice brings a cure for all
sorrow ? or care for the plight
Of the palm's self whose slow growth pro-
duced them ? Not so ! stem and branch
Shall decay, nor be known in their place,
while the palm-wine shall staunch
Every wound of man's spirit in winter. I
pour thee such wine.
Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for !
the spirit be thine !
By the spirit, when age shall o'ercome thee,
thou still shalt enjoy
More indeed, than at first when unconscious,
the life of a boy.
Crush that life, and behold its wine running !
each deed thou hast done
Dies, revives, goes to work in the world ;
until e'en as the sun

Looking down on the earth, though clouds
 spoil him, though tempests efface,
Can find nothing his own deed produced
 not, must everywhere trace
The results of his past summer-prime,—so,
 each ray of thy will,
Every flash of thy passion and prowess, long
 over, shall thrill
Thy whole people, the countless, with ardour,
 till they too give forth
A like cheer to their sons, who in turn fill
 the south and the north
With the radiance thy deed was the germ
 of. Carouse in the past.
But the licence of age has its limit ; thou
 diest at last.
As the lion when age dims his eyeball, the
 rose at her height,
So with man—so his power and his beauty
 for ever take flight.
No ! again a long draught of my soul-wine !
 look forth o'er the years—
Thou hast done now with eyes for the
 actual ; begin with the seer's !
Is Saul dead ? in the depth of the vale make
 his tomb—bid arise
A gray mountain of marble heaped four-
 square, till built to the skies.
Let it mark where the great First King
 slumbers—whose fame would ye know ?
Up above see the rock's naked face, where
 the record shall go

In great characters cut by the scribe,—Such
was Saul, so he did ;
With the sages directing the work, by the
populace chid,—
For not half, they'll affirm, is comprised
there ! Which fault to amend,
In the grove with his kind grows the cedar,
whereon they shall spend
(See, in tablets 'tis level before them) their
praise, and record
With the gold of the graver, Saul's story,—
the statesman's great word
Side by side with the poet's sweet comment.
The river's a-wave
With smooth paper-reeds grazing each other
when prophet winds rave :
So the pen gives unborn generations their
due and their part
In thy being ! Then, first of the mighty,
thank God that thou art."

XIV.

And behold while I sang . . . But O Thou
who didst grant me that day,
And before it not seldom hast granted, thy
help to essay,
Carry on and complete an adventure,—my
Shield and my Sword
In that act where my soul was thy servant,
thy word was my word,—

Still be with me, who then at the summit
of human endeavour
And scaling the highest man's thought could,
gazed hopeless as ever
On the new stretch of Heaven above me—
till, mighty to save,
Just one lift of thy hand cleared that distance
—God's throne from man's grave?
Let me tell out my tale to its ending—my
voice to my heart,
Which can scarce dare believe in what
marvels that night I took part,
As this morning I gather the fragments, alone
with my sheep,
And still fear lest the terrible glory vanish
like sleep!
For I wake in the gray dewy covert, while
Hebron upheaves
The dawn struggling with night on his
shoulder, and Kidron retrieves
Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

xv.

I say then,—my song
While I sang thus, assuring the monarch,
and ever more strong
Made a proffer of good to console him—he
slowly resumed
His old motions and habitudes kingly. The
right hand replumed

His black locks to their wonted composure,
adjusted the swathes
Of his turban, and see—the huge sweat that
his countenance bathes,
He wipes off with the robe; and he girds
now his loins as of yore,
And feels slow for the armlets of price, with
the clasp set before.
He is Saul, ye remember in glory,—ere
error had bent
The broad brow from the daily communion;
and still, though much spent
Be the life and the bearing that front you,
the same, God did choose,
To receive what a man may waste, desecrate,
never quite lose.
So sank he along by the tent-prop, till,
stayed by the pile
Of his armour and war-cloak and garments,
he leaned there awhile,
And sat out my singing,—one arm round the
tent-prop, to raise
His bent head, and the other hung slack—
till I touched on the praise
I foresaw from all men in all times, to the
man patient there,
And thus ended, the harp falling forward.
Then first I was 'ware
That he sat, as I say, with my head just
above his vast knees
Which were thrust out on each side around
me, like oak-roots which please

To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I looked
up to know
If the best I could do had brought solace :
he spoke not, but slow
Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he
laid it with care
Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on
my brow : thro' my hair
The large fingers were pushed, and he bent
back my head, with kind power—
All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men
do a flower.
Thus held he me there with his great eyes
that scrutinised mine—
And oh, all my heart how it loved him ! but
where was the sign ?
I yearned—"Could I help thee, my father,
inventing a bliss,
I would add to that life of the past, both the
future and this.
I would give thee new life altogether, as
good, ages hence,
As this moment,—had love but the warrant,
love's heart to dispense !"

XVI.

Then the truth came upon me. No harp
more—no song more ! outbroke—
"I have gone the whole round of Creation :
I saw and I spoke !

I, a work of God's hand for that purpose,
received in my brain
And pronounced on the rest of his handiwork
—returned him again
His creation's approval or censure : I spoke
as I saw.
I report, as a man may of God's work—all's
love, yet all's law !
Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me.
Each faculty tasked
To perceive him, has gained an abyss, where
a dewdrop was asked.
Have I knowledge? confounded it shrivels at
wisdom laid bare.
Have I forethought? how purblind, how
blank, to the Infinite care !
Do I task any faculty highest, to image
success ?
I but open my eyes,—and perfection, no
more and no less,
In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and
God is seen God
In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the
soul and the clod.
And thus looking within and around me, I
ever renew
(With that stoop of the soul which in bend-
ing upraises it too)
The submission of Man's nothing-perfect to
God's All-Complete,
As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb
to his feet !

Yet with all this abounding experience, this
Deity known,
I shall dare to discover some province, some
gift of my own.
There's one faculty pleasant to exercise, hard
to hoodwink,
I am fain to keep still in abeyance (I laugh
as I think),
Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it, wot
ye, I worst
E'en the Giver in one gift—Behold! I could
love if I durst!
But I sink the pretension as fearing a man
may o'ertake
God's own speed in the one way of love: I
abstain, for love's sake!
—What, my soul? see thus far and no
farther? when doors great and small,
Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, should
the hundredth appal?
In the least things have faith, yet distrust in
the greatest of all?
Do I find love so full in my nature, God's
ultimate gift,
That I doubt his own love can compete with
it? here, the parts shift?
Here, the creature surpass the Creator, the
end, what Began?—
Would I fain in my impotent yearning do
all for this man,
And dare doubt He alone shall not help him,
who yet alone can?

Would it ever have entered my mind, the
bare will, much less power,
To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the
marvellous dower
Of the life he was gifted and filled with? to
make such a soul,
Such a body, and then such an earth for
insphering the whole?
And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm
tears attest)
These good things being given, to go on,
and give one more, the best?
Ay, to save and redeem and restore him,
maintain at the height
This perfection,—succeed with life's day-
spring, death's minute of night?
Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul,
the mistake,
Saul, the failure, the ruin he seems now,—
and bid him awake
From the dream, the probation, the prelude,
to find himself set
Clear and safe in new light and new life,—
a new harmony yet
To be run, and continued, and ended—who
knows?—or endure!
The man taught enough by life's dream, of
the rest to make sure.
By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning
intensified bliss,
And the next world's reward and repose, by
the struggle in this.

XVII.

"I believe it! 'tis Thou, God, that givest,
'tis I who receive :
In the first is the last, in thy will is my power
to believe.
All's one gift : thou canst grant it moreover,
as prompt to my prayer
As I breathe out this breath, as I open these
arms to the air.
From thy will, stream the worlds, life and
nature, thy dread Sabaoth :
I will?—the mere atoms despise me! and
why am I loth
To look that, even that in the face too? why
is it I dare
Think but lightly of such impuissance? what
stops my despair?
This ;—'tis not what man Does which exalts
him, but what man Would do !
See the King—I would help him but cannot,
the wishes fall through,
Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow,
grow poor to enrich,
To fill up his life, to starve my own out, I
would—knowing which,
I know that my service is perfect.—Oh,
speak through me now !
Would I suffer for him that I love? So wilt
Thou—so wilt Thou !

So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest,
uttermost Crown—
And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave
up nor down
One spot for the creature to stand in! It is
by no breath,
Turn of eye, wave of hand, that Salvation
joins issue with death!
As thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty
be proved
Thy power, that exists with and for it, of
Being beloved!
He who did most, shall bear most; the
strongest shall stand the most weak.
'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for!
my flesh, that I seek
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O
Saul, it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee: a
Man like to me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever!
a Hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to
thee? See the Christ stand!'

XVIII.

I know not too well how I found my way
home in the night.
There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to
left and to right,

Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the
 alive—the aware—
I repressed, I got through them as hardly,
 as strugglingly there,
As a runner beset by the populace famished
 for news—
Life or death. The whole earth was
 awakened, hell loosed with her crews;
And the stars of night beat with emotion,
 and tingled and shot
Out in fire the strong pain of pent know-
 ledge: but I fainted not.
For the Hand still impelled me at once and
 supported—suppressed
All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet,
 and holy behest,
Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the
 earth sank to rest.
Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had
 withered from earth—
Not so much, but I saw it die out in the
 day's tender birth;
In the gathered intensity brought to the gray
 of the hills;
In the shuddering forests' new awe; in the
 sudden wind-thrills;
In the startled wild beasts that bore off, each
 with an eye sidling still
Tho' averted, in wonder and dread; and the
 birds stiff and chill

That rose heavily, as I approached them,
made stupid with awe !
E'en the serpent that slid away silent,—he
felt the new Law.
The same stared in the white humid faces
upturned by the flowers ;
The same worked in the heart of the cedar,
and moved the vine-bowers.
And the little brooks witnessing, murmured,
persistent and low,
With their obstinate, all but hushed voices
—E'en so ! it is so.

“DE GUSTIBUS—”

I.

YOUR ghost will walk, you lover of trees,
 (If loves remain)
 In an English lane,
By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.
Hark, those two in the hazel coppice—
A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,
 Making love, say,—
 The happier they !
Draw yourself up from the light of the moon
And let them pass, as they will too soon,
 With the beanflowers' boon,
 And the blackbird's tune,
 And May, and June !

II.

What I love best in all the world,
Is, a castle, precipice-encurled,
In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine.
Or look for me, old fellow of mine,
(If I get my head from out the mouth
O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,
And come again to the land of lands)—
In a sea-side house to the farther south,
Where the baked cicalas die of drouth,
And one sharp tree ('tis a cypress) stands,

By the many hundred years red-rusted,
Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'ercrusted,
My sentinel to guard the sands
To the water's edge. For, what expand
Without the house, but the great opaque
Blue breadth of sea, and not a break?
While, in the house, for ever crumbles
Some fragment of the frescoed walls,
From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.
A girl bare-footed brings and tumbles
Down on the pavement, green-flesh melons,
And says there's news to-day—the king
Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,
Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling;
—She hopes they have not caught the felons.
Italy, my Italy!
Queen Mary's saying serves for me—
(When fortune's malice
Lost her, Calais.)
Open my heart and you will see
Graved inside of it, "Italy."
Such lovers old are I and she;
So it always was, so it still shall be!

WOMEN AND ROSES.

I.

I DREAM of a red-rose tree,
And which of its roses three
Is the dearest rose to me ?

II.

Round and round, like a dance of snow
In a dazzling drift, as its guardians, go
Floating the women faded for ages,
Sculptured in stone, on the poet's pages.
Then follow the women fresh and gay,
Living and loving and loved to-day.
Last, in the rear, flee the multitude of
 maidens,
Beauties unborn. And all, to one cadence,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

III.

Dear rose, thy term is reached,
Thy leaf hangs loose and bleached :
Bees pass it unimpeached.

IV.

Stay then, stoop, since I cannot climb,
You, great shapes of the antique time !

How shall I fix you, fire you, freeze you,
Break my heart at your feet to please you?
Oh ! to possess, and be possessed !
Hearts that beat 'neath each pallid breast !
But once of love, the poesy, the passion,
Drink once and die !—In vain, the same
fashion,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

V.

Dear rose, thy joy's undimmed ;
Thy cup is ruby-rimmed,
Thy cup's heart nectar-brimmed.

VI.

Deep as drops from a statue's plinth
The bee sucked in by the hyacinth,
So will I bury me while burning,
Quench like him at a plunge my yearning,
Eyes in your eyes, lips on your lips !
Fold me fast where the cincture slips,
Prison all my soul in eternities of pleasure !
Girdle me once ? But no—in their old
measure
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

VII.

Dear rose without a thorn,
Thy bud's the babe unborn :
First streak of a new morn.

VIII.

Wings, lend wings for the cold, the clear !
What's far conquers what is near.
Roses will bloom nor want beholders.
Sprung from the dust where our own flesh
 moulders.
What shall arrive with the cycle's change ?
A novel grace and a beauty strange.
I will make an Eve, be the artist that began
 her,
Shaped her to his mind!—Alas! in like
 manner
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

THROUGH THE METIDJA TO
ABD-EL-KADR.

[1842.]

As I ride, as I ride,
With a full heart for my guide,
So its tide rocks my side,
As I ride, as I ride,
That, as I were double-eyed,
He, in whom our Tribes confide,
Is descried, ways untried
As I ride, as I ride.

II.

As I ride, as I ride
To our Chief and his Allied,
Who dares chide my heart's pride
As I ride, as I ride ?
Or are witnesses denied—
Through the desert waste and wide
Do I glide unespied
As I ride, as I ride ?

III.

As I ride, as I ride,
When an inner voice has cried,
The sands slide, nor abide
(As I ride, as I ride)
O'er each visioned Homicide
That came vaunting (has he lied ?)
To reside—where he died,
As I ride, as I ride.

IV.

As I ride, as I ride,
Ne'er has spur my swift horse plied,
Yet his hide, streaked and pied,
As I ride, as I ride,
Shows where sweat has sprung and
dried,
—Zebra-footed, ostrich-thighed—

How has vied stride with stride
As I ride, **as** I ride !

v.

As I ride, as I ride,
Could I loose what Fate has tied,
Ere I pried, she should hide
As I ride, as I ride,
All that's meant me : satisfied
When the Prophet and the Bride
Stop veins I'd have subside
As I ride, as I ride !

MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-
GOTHA.

I.

HIST, but a word, fair and soft !
Forth and be judged, Master Hugues !
Answer the question I've put you so oft—
What do you mean by your mountainous
fugues ?
See, we're alone in the loft,

II.

I, the poor organist here,
Hugues, the composer of note—

Dead, though, and done with, this many a
year—

Let's have a colloquy, something to quote,
Make the world prick up its ear !

III.

See, the church empties apace.

Fast they extinguish the lights—
Hallo, there, sacristan ! five minutes' grace !
Here's a crank pedal wants setting to
rights,
Baulks one of holding the base.

IV.

See, our huge house of the sounds

Hushing its hundreds at once,
Bids the last loiterer back to his bounds
—Oh, you may challenge them, not a
response
Get the church saints on their rounds !

V.

(Saints go their rounds, who shall doubt ?

—March, with the moon to admire,
Up nave, down chancel, turn transept about,
Supervise all betwixt pavement and spire,
Put rats and mice to the rout—

VI.

Aloys and Jurien and Just—

Order things back to their place,
Have a sharp eye lest the candlesticks rust,
Rub the church plate, darn the sacrament
lace,
Clear the desk velvet of dust.)

VII.

Here's your book, younger folks shelve !
Played I not off-hand and runningly,
Just now, your masterpiece, hard number
twelve ?

Here's what should strike,—could one
handle it cunningly.
Help the axe, give it a helve !

VIII.

Page after page as I played,
Every bar's rest where one wipes
Sweat from one's brow, I looked up and
surveyed

O'er my three claviers, yon forest of pipes
Whence you still peeped in the shade.

IX.

Sure you were wishful to speak,
You, with brow ruled like a score,

Yes, and eyes buried in pits on each cheek,
Like two great breves, as they wrote them
of yore,
Each side that bar, your straight beak !

X.

Sure you said—" Good, the mere notes !
Still, couldst thou take my intent,
Know what procured me our Company's
votes—
Masters being lauded and sciolists shent,
Parted the sheep from the goats ! "

XI.

Well then, speak up, never flinch !
Quick, ere my candle's a snuff
—Burnt, do you see ? to its uttermost
inch—
I believe in you, but that's not enough
Give my conviction a clinch !

XII.

First you deliver your phrase
—Nothing propound, that I see,
Fit in itself for much blame or much praise—
Answered no less, where no answer needs
be :
Off start the Two on their ways !

XIII.

Straight must a Third interpose,
Volunteer needlessly help—
In strikes a Fourth, a Fifth thrusts in his
nose,
So the cry's open, the kennel's a-yelp,
Argument's hot to the close !

XIV.

One dissertates, he is candid—
Two must discept,—has distinguished !
Three helps the couple, if ever yet man did :
Four protests, Five makes a dart at the
thing wished—
Back to One, goes the case bandied !

XV.

One says his say with a difference—
More of expounding, explaining !
All now is wrangle, abuse, and vociferance—
Now there's a truce, all's subdued, self-
restraining—
Five, though, stands out all the stiffer hence.

XVI.

One is Incisive, corrosive—
Two retorts, nettled, curt, crepitant—

Three makes rejoinder, expansive, explosive—
 Four overbears them all, strident and
 strepitant—
 Five . . . O Danaides, O Sieve!

XVII.

Now, they ply axes and crowbars—
 Now, they prick pins at a tissue
 Fine as a skein of the casuist Escobar's
 Worked on the bone of a lie. To what
 issue?
 Where is our gain at the Two-bars?

XVIII.

Est fuga, volvitur rota!
 On we drift. Where looms the dim port?
 One, Two, Three, Four, Five, contribute
 their quota—
 Something is gained, if one caught but
 the import—
 Show it us—Hugues of Saxe-Gotha!

XIX.

What with affirming, denying.
 Holding, risposting, subjoining,
 All's like . . . it's like . . . for an instance
 I'm trying . . .
 There! See our roof, its gilt moulding
 and groining
 Under those spider-webs lying!

XX.

So your figure broadens and thickens,
Greatens and deepens and lengthens,
Till one exclaims—"But where's music, the
dickens?
Blot ye the gold, while your spider-web
strengthens
Blackened to the stoutest of tickens?"

XXI.

I for man's effort am zealous.
Prove me such censure's unfounded!
Seems it surprising a lover grows jealous—
Hopes 'twas for something his organ-pipes
sounded,
Tiring three boys at the bellows?

XXII.

Is it your moral of Life?
Such a web, simple and subtle,
Weave we on earth here in impotent strife,
Backward and forward each throwing his
shuttle,
Death ending all with a knife?

XXIII.

Over our heads Truth and Nature—
Still our life's zigzags and dodges,
Ins and outs weaving a new legislature—

God's gold just shining its last where that
lodges
Palled beneath Man's usurpature !

XXIV.

So we o'ershroud stars and roses,
Cherub and trophy and garland.
Nothings grow something which quietly
closes
Heaven's earnest eye,—not a glimpse of
the far land
Gets through our comments and glozes.

XXV.

Ah, but traditions, inventions,
(Say we and make up a visage)
So many men with such various intentions
Down the past ages must know more than
this age !
Leave the web all its dimensions !

XXVI.

Who thinks Hugues wrote for the deaf?
Proved a mere mountain in labour?
Better submit—try again—what's the clef?
'Faith, it's no trifle for pipe and for
tabor—
. Four flats—the minor in F.

XXVII.

Friend, your fugue taxes the finger.

Learning it once, who would lose it?

Yet all the while a misgiving will linger—

Truth's golden o'er us although we refuse
it—

Nature, thro' dust-clouds we fling her?

XXVIII.

Hugues! I advise *meâ pænâ* \

(Counterpoint glares like a Gorgon)

Bid One, Two, Three, Four, Five, clear the
arena!

Say the word, straight I unstop the Full-
Organ,

Blare out the *mode Palestrina*.

XXIX.

While in the roof, if I'm right there—

. . . Lo, you, the wick in the socket!

Hallo, you sacristan, show us a light there!

Down it dips, gone like a rocket!

What, you want, do you, to come unawares,

Sweeping the church up for first morning-
prayers,

And find a poor devil at end of his cares

At the foot of your rotten-planked rat-
riddled stairs?

Do I carry the moon in my pocket?

BEFORE.

I.

LET them fight it out, *friend*! things have
gone too far.
God must judge the couple! leave them as
they are
—Whichever one's the guiltless, to his glory,
And whichever one the guilt's with, to my
story.

II.

Why, you would not bid men, sunk in such
a slough,
Strike no arm out further, stick and stink as
now,
Leaving right and wrong to settle the em-
broilment,
Heaven with snaky Hell, in torture and
entailment?

III.

Which of them's the culprit, how must he
conceive
God's the queen he caps to, laughing in his
sleeve!
'Tis but decent to profess oneself beneath
her.
Still, one must not be too much in earnest
either,

IV.

Better sin the whole sin, sure that God observes,
Then go live his life out ! life will try his
nerves,
When the sky, which noticed all, makes no
disclosure,
And the earth keeps up her terrible composure.

V.

Let him pace at pleasure, past the walls of
rose,
Pluck their fruits when grape-trees graze him
as he goes.
For he 'gins to guess the purpose of the garden,
With the sly mute thing beside there for a
warden.

VI.

What's the leopard-dog-thing, constant to
his side,
A leer and lie in every eye on its obsequious
hide ?
When will come an end of all the mock
obeisance,
And the price appear that pays for the mis-
feasance ?

VII.

So much for the culprit. Who's the martyred
man ?
Let him bear one stroke more, for be sure he
can.

He that strove thus evil's lump with good to
 leaven,
Let him give his blood at last and get his
 heaven.

VIII.

All or nothing, stake it ! trusts he God or no ?
Thus far and no farther ? farther ? be it so.
Now, enough of your chicane of prudent
 pauses,
Sage provisos, sub-intents, and saving-
 clauses.

IX.

Ah, "forgive" you bid him ? While God's
 champion lives,
Wrong shall be resisted : dead, why he
 forgives.
But you must not end my friend ere you
 begin him ;
Evil stands not crowned on earth, while
 breath is in him.

X.

Once more—Will the wronger, at this last of
 all,
Dare to say "I did wrong," rising in his
 fall ?
No ?—Let go, then—both the fighters to
 their places—
While I count three, step you back as many
 paces.

AFTER.

TAKE the cloak from his face, and at first
Let the corpse do its worst.

How he lies in his rights of a man !
Death has done all death can.
And absorbed in the new life he leads,
He recks not, he heeds
Nor his wrong nor my vengeance—both strike
On his senses alike,
And are lost in the solemn and strange
Surprise of the change.

Ha, what avails death to erase
His offence, my disgrace ?
I would we were boys as of old
In the field, by the fold—
His outrage, God's patience, man's scorn
Were so easily borne.

I stand here now, he lies in his place—
Cover the face.

IN THREE DAYS.

I.

So, I shall see her in three days
And just one night, but nights are short,

Then two long hours, and that is morn.
See how I come, unchanged, unworn—
Feel, where my life broke off from thine,
How fresh the splinters keep and fine,—
Only a touch and we combine !

II.

Too long, this time of year, the days !
But nights—at least the nights are short.
As night shows where her one moon is,
A hand's-breadth of pure light and bliss,
So, life's night gives my lady birth
And my eyes hold her ! what is worth
The rest of heaven, the rest of earth ?

III.

O loaded curls, release your store
Of warmth and scent as once before
The tingling hair did, lights and darks
Out-breaking into fairy sparks
When under curl and curl I pried
After the warmth and scent inside,
Thro' lights and darks how manifold—
The dark inspired, the light controlled !
As early Art embrowned the gold.

IV.

What great fear—should one say, “Three
days
That change the world, might change as
well

Your fortune ; and if joy delays,
Be happy that no worse befell.”
What small fear—if another says,
“ Three days and one short night beside
May throw no shadow on your ways ;
But years must teem with change untried,
With chance not easily defied,
With an end somewhere undescried.”
No fear !—or if a fear be born
This minute, it dies out in scorn.
Fear ? I shall see her in three days
And one night, now the nights are short,
Then just two hours, and that is morn.

IN A YEAR.

I.

NEVER any more
While I live,
Need I hope to see his face
As before.
Once his love grown chill,
Mine may strive—
Bitterly we re-embrace,
Single still.

II.

Was it something said,
Something done,

Vexed him? was it touch of hand,
Turn of head?
Strange! that very way
Love begun.
I as little understand
Love's decay.

III.

When I sewed or drew,
I recall
How he looked as if I sang,
—Sweetly too.
If I spoke a word,
First of all
Up his check the colour sprang,
Then he heard.

IV.

Sitting by my side,
At my feet,
So he breathed the air I breathed,
Satisfied!
I, too, at love's brim
Touched the sweet:
I would die if death bequeathed
Sweet to him.

V.

“Speak, I love thee best!”
He exclaimed.

“Let thy love my own foretell,—
I confessed :
“Clasp my heart on thine
Now unblamed,
Since upon thy soul as well
Hangeth mine !”

VI.

Was it wrong to own,
Being truth ?
Why should all the giving prove
His alone ?
I had wealth and ease,
Beauty, youth—
Since my lover gave me love,
I gave these.

VII.

That was all I meant,
—To be just,
And the passion I had raised
To content.
Since he chose to change
Gold for dust,
If I gave him what he praised
Was it strange ?

VIII.

Would he loved me yet,
On and on,

While I found some way undreamed
—Paid my debt !
Gave more life and more,
Till, all gone,
He should smile, "She never seemed
Mine before.

IX.

"What—she felt the while,
Must I think ?
Love's so different with us men,"
He should smile.
"Dying for my sake
White and pink !
Can't we touch these bubbles then
But they break ?"

X.

Dear, the pang is brief,
Do thy part,
Have thy pleasure. How perplex
Grows belief !
Well, this cold clay clod
Was man's heart.
Crumble it—and what comes next ?
Is it God ?

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM
ABROAD.

I.

OH, to be in England
Now that April's there,
And whoever wakes in England
Sees, some morning, unaware,
That the lowest boughs and the brushwood
 sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard
 bough
In England—now !

II.

And after April, when May follows,
And the whitethroat builds, and all the
 swallows—
Hark ! where my blossomed pear-tree in the
 hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dewdrops—a the bent spray's
 edge—
That's the wise thrush ; he sings each song
 twice over,

Lest you should think he never could re-
capture
The first fine careless rapture !
And though the fields look rough with hoary
dew,
All will be gay when noontide wakes
anew
The buttercups, the little children's dower,
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-
flower !

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA.

NOBLY, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the
north-west died away ;
Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking
into Cadiz Bay ;
Bluish 'mid the burning water, full in face
Trafalgar lay ;
In the dimmest north-east distance, dawned
Gibraltar grand and gray ;
“ Here and here did England help me,—
how can I help England ? ”—say,
Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God
to praise and pray,
While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over
Africa.

THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB
AT ST. PRAXED'S CHURCH.

[ROME, 15—.]

VANITY, saith the preacher, vanity !
Draw round my bed : is Anselm keeping
back ?
Nephews—sons mine . . . ah God, I know
not ! Well—
She, men would have to be your mother
once,
Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was !
What's done is done, and she is dead
beside,
Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since,
And as she died so must we die ourselves,
And thence ye may perceive the world's a
dream.
Life, how and what is it ? As here I lie
In this state-chamber, dying by degrees,
Hours and long hours in the dead night, I
ask
“Do I live, am I dead ?” Peace, peace
seems all.
St. Praxed's ever was the church for peace ;
And so, about this tomb of mine. I
fought
With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye
know :

—Old Gandolf cozened me, despite my
care ;
Shrewd was that snatch from out the corner
South
He graced his carrion with, God curse the
same !
Yet still my niche is not so cramped but
thence
One sees the pulpit o' the epistle-side,
And somewhat of the choir, those silent
seats,
And up into the aery dome where live
The angels, and a sunbeam's sure to lurk :
And I shall fill my slab of basalt there,
And 'neath my tabernacle take my rest,
With those nine columns round me, two and
two,
The odd one at my feet where Anselm
stands :
Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the
ripe,
As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse
—Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone,
Put me where I may look at him ! True
peach,
Rosy and flawless : how I earned the
prize !
Draw close : that conflagration of my
church
—What then ? So much was saved if aught
were missed !

My sons, ye would not be my death? Go dig
The white-grape vineyard where the oil-press
stood,

Drop water gently till the surface sinks,
And if ye find . . . ah God, -I know not,
I! . . .

Bedded in store of rotten fig-leaves soft,
And corded up in a tight olive-frail,
Some lump, ah God, of *lapis lazuli*,
Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape,
Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast . . .
Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all,
That brave Frascati villa with its bath,
So, let the blue lump poise between my
knees,
Like God the Father's globe on both his
hands

Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay,
For Gandolf shall not choose but see and
burst!

Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years :
Man goeth to the grave, and where is he?
Did I say basalt for my slab, sons? Black—
'Twas ever antique-black I meant! How
else

Shall ye contrast my frieze to come beneath?
The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me,
Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and
perchance

Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,
The Saviour at his sermon on the mount,

St. Praxed in a glory, and one Pan
Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment
off,

And Moses with the tables . . . but I know
Ye mark me not ! What do they whisper
thee,

Child of my bowels, Anselm ? ' Ah, ye hope
To revel down my villas while I gasp
Bricked o'er with beggar's mouldy travertine
Which Gandolf from his tomb-top chuckles
at !

Nay, boys, ye love me—all of jasper, then !
'Tis jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I grieve
My bath must needs be left behind, alas !
One block, pure green as a pistachio-nut,
There's plenty jasper somewhere in the
world—

And have I not St. Praxed's ear to pray
Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts,
And mistresses with great smooth marbly
limbs ?

—That's if ye carve my epitaph aright,
Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every
word,

No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second line—
Tully, my masters ? Ulpian serves his need !
And then how I shall lie through centuries,
And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,
And see God made and eaten all day long,
And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste
Good strong thick stupefying incense-smoke !

For as I lie here, hours of the dead night,
Dying in state and by such slow degrees,
I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook,
And stretch my feet forth straight as stone
can point,

And let the bedclothes for a mort-cloth drop
Into great laps and folds of sculptor's-work :
And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange
thoughts

Grow, with a certain humming in my ears,
About the life before I lived this life,
And this life too, Popes, Cardinals and
Priests,

St. Praxed at his sermon on the mount,
Your tall pale mother with her talking eyes,
And new-found agate urns as fresh as day,
And marble's language, Latin pure, discreet,
—Aha, ELUCESCEBAT quoth our friend?

No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best !

Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage.

All *lapis*, all, sons ! Else I give the Pope

My villas : will ye ever eat my heart ?

Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,

They glitter like your mother's for my soul,

Or ye would heighten my impoverished frieze,

Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase

With grapes, and add a vizor and a Term,

And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx

That in his struggle throws the thyrsus
down,

To comfort me on my entablature

Whereon I am to lie till I must ask
"Do I live, am I dead?" There, leave me,
there !
For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude
To death—ye wish it—God, ye wish it !
Stone—
Gritstone, a-crumble ! Clammysquares which
sweat
As if the corpse they keep were oozing
through—
And no more *lapis* to delight the world !
Well, go ! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there,
But in a row : and, going, turn your backs
—Ay, like departing altar-ministrants,
And leave me in my church, the church for
peace,
That I may watch at leisure if he leers—
Old Gandolf, at me, from his onion-stone,
As still he envied me, so fair she was !

CAVALIER TUNES.

I.—MARCHING ALONG.

I:

KENTISH Sir Byng stood for his King,
Bidding the crop-headed Parliament swing :
And, pressing a troop unable to stoop
And see the rogues flourish and honest folk
droop,

Marched them along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

II.

God for King Charles! Pym and such
carles
To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous
parles!
Cavaliers, up! Lips from the cup,
Hands from the pasty, nor bite take nor sup
Till you're (*Chorus*) *marching along, fifty-*
score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

III.

Hampden to Hell, and his obsequies' knell
Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry
as well!
England, good cheer! Rupert is near!
Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here
(*Cho.*) *Marching along, fifty-score strong,*
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this
song!

IV.

Then, God for King Charles! Pym and his
snarls
To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent
carles!

Hold by the right, you double your might ;
So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the
fight,

(*Cho.*) *March we along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this
song!*

II.—GIVE A ROUSE.

I.

King Charles, and who'll do him right
now?
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight
now?
Give a rouse : here's, in Hell's despite now,
King Charles !

II.

Who gave me the goods that went since?
Who raised me the house that sank once ?
Who helped me to gold I spent since ?
Who found me in wine you drank once ?
(*Cho.*) *King Charles, and who'll do him right
now ?
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight
now ?
Give a rouse : here's, in Hell's despite
now,
King Charles !*

III.

To whom used my boy George quaff else,
 By the old fool's side that begot him?
 For whom did he cheer and laugh else,
 While Noll's damned troopers shot him?

(*Cho.*) *King Charles, and who'll do him right
 now?*

*King Charles, and who's ripe for fight
 now?*

*Give a rouse: here's, in Hell's despite
 now,*

King Charles!

III.—BOOT AND SADDLE.

I.

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!
 Rescue my Castle, before the hot day
 Brightens to blue from its silvery gray,
 (*Cho.*) *Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*

II.

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you'd say;
 Many's the friend there, will listen and
 pray
 "God's luck to gallants that strike up the
 lay,
 (*Cho.*) *"Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!"*

III.

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,
 Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Roundheads'
 array :
 Who laughs, "Good fellows ere this, by my
 fay,
 (Cho.) "*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*"

IV.

Who? My wife Gertrude ; that, honest and
 gay,
 Laughs when you talk of surrendering,
 "Nay!
 "I've better counsellors ; what counsel they?
 (Cho.) "*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*"

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP.

I.

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon
 A mile or so away
 On a little mound, Napoléon
 Stood on our storming-day ;
 With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,
 Legs wide, arms locked behind,
 As if to balance the prone brow
 Oppressive with its mind.

II.

Just as perhaps he mused "My plans
"That soar, to earth may fall,
"Let once my army-leader Lannes,
"Waver at yonder wall,"—
Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew
A rider, bound on bound
Full-galloping ; nor bridle drew
Until he reached the mound.

III.

Then off there flung in smiling joy,
And held himself erect
By just his horse's mane, a boy :
You hardly could suspect—
(So tight he kept his lips compressed,
Scarce any blood came thro')
You looked twice ere you saw his
breast
Was all but shot in two.

IV.

"Well," cried he, "Emperor, by God's
grace
"We've got you Ratisbon !
"The Marshal's in the market-place,
"And you'll be there anon
"To see your flag-bird flap his vans
"Where I, to heart's desire,

"Perched him!" The Chief's eye flashed;
 his plans
 Soared up again like fire.

v.

The Chief's eye flashed; but presently
 Softened itself, as sheathes
 A film the mother eagle's eye
 When her bruised eaglet breathes:
 "You're wounded!" "Nay," his soldier's
 pride
 Touched to the quick, he said:
 "I'm killed, Sire!" And, his Chief beside,
 Smiling the boy fell dead.

THE LOST LEADER.

i.

Just for a handful of silver he left us,
 Just for a riband to stick in his coat—
 Found the one gift on which fortune bereft us,
 Lost all the others she lets us devote;
 They, with the gold to give, doled him out
 silver,
 So much was theirs who so little allowed:
 How all our copper had gone for his
 service!
 Rags—were they purple, his heart had
 been proud!

We that had loved him so, followed him,
honoured him,
Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
Learned his great language, caught his clear
accents,
Made him our pattern to live and to die !
Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they watch
from their graves !
He alone breaks from the van and the free-
men,
He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves !

II.

We shall march prospering,—not thro' his
presence ;
Songs may inspire us,—not from his
lyre ;
Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his
quiescence,
Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade
aspire :
Blot out his name, then,—record one lost
soul more,
One task more declined, one more footpath
untrod,
One more triumph for devils, and sorrow for
angels,
One wrong more to man, one more insult
to God !

Life's night begins : let him never come back
to us !

There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,
Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of
twilight,

Never glad confident morning again !
Best fight on well, for we taught him,—strike
gallantly,

Aim at our heart ere we pierce through
his own ;

Then let him receive the new knowledge and
wait us,

Pardoned in Heaven, the first by the
throne !

GARDEN-FANCIES.

I.

THE FLOWER'S NAME.

I.

HERE'S the garden she walked across,

Arm in my arm, such a short while since :

Hark, now I push its wicket, the moss

Hinders the hinges and makes them wince !

She must have reached this shrub ere she
turned,

As back with that murmur the wicket
swung ;

190 ROBERT BROWNING.

For she laid the poor snail, my chance foot
spurned,
To feed and forget it the leaves among.

II.

Down this side of the gravel-walk
She went while her robe's edge brushed
the box :
And here she paused in her gracious talk
To point me a moth on the milk-white flox.
Roses, ranged in valiant row,
I will never think that she passed you by !
She loves you noble roses, I know ;
But yonder, see, where the rock-plants lie !

III.

This flower she stopped at, finger on lip,
Stooped over, in doubt, as settling its claim ;
Till she gave me, with pride to make no slip,
Its soft meandering Spanish name.
What a name ! was it love, or praise ?
Speech half-asleep, or song half-awake ?
I must learn Spanish, one of these days,
Only for that slow sweet name's sake.

IV.

Roses, if I live and do well,
I may bring her, one of these days,
To fix you fast with as fine a spell,
Fit you each with his Spanish phrase !

But do not detain me now ; for she lingers
There, like sunshine over the ground,
And ever I see her soft white fingers
Searching after the bud she found.

v. .

Flower, you Spaniard, look that you grow
not,
Stay as you are and be loved for ever !
Bud, if I kiss you 'tis that you blow not,
Mind, the shut pink mouth opens never !
For while thus it pouts, her fingers
wrestle,
Twinkling the audacious leaves between,
Till round they turn and down they
nestle—
Is not the dear mark still to be seen ?

vi.

Where I find her not, beauties vanish ;
Whither I follow her, beauties flee ;
Is there no method to tell her in Spanish
June's twice June since she breathed it
with me ?
Come, bud, show me the least of her
traces,
Treasure my lady's lightest footfall
—Ah, you may flout and turn up your
faces—
Roses, you are not so fair after all !

II.

SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURGENSIS

I.

Plague take all your pedants, say I !

He who wrote what I hold in my hand,
Centuries back was so good as to die,

Leaving this rubbish to cumber the land ;
This, that was a book in its time,

Printed on paper and bound in leather,
Last month in the white of a matin-prime
Just when the birds sang all together.

II.

Into the garden I brought it to read,

And under the arbut and laurustine
Read it, so help me grace in my need,
From title-page to closing line.

Chapter on chapter did I count,

As a curious traveller counts Stonehenge ;
Added up the mortal amount ;

And then proceeded to my revenge.

III.

Yonder's a plum-tree, with a crevice

An owl would build in, were he but sage ;
For a lap of moss, like a fine pont-levis
In a castle of the middle age,

Joins to a lip of gum, pure amber ;
 When he'd be private, there might he
 spend
 Hours alone in his lady's chamber :
 Into this crevice I dropped our friend.

IV.

Splash, went he, as under he ducked,
 —I knew at the bottom rain-drippings
 stagnate ;
 Next a handful of blossoms I plucked
 To bury him with, my bookshelf's
 magnate ;
 Then I went in-doors, brought out a
 loaf,
 Half a cheese, and a bottle of Chablis ;
 Lay on the grass and forgot the oaf
 Over a jolly chapter of Rabelais.

V.

Now, this morning, betwixt the moss
 And gum that locked our friend in
 limbo,
 A spider had spun his web across,
 And sate in the midst with arms a-
 kimbo ;
 So, I took pity, for learning's sake,
 And, *de profundis, accentibus lætis*,
Cantate! quoth I, as I got a rake,
 And up I fished his delectable treatise.

VI.

Here you have it, dry in the sun,
With all the binding all of a blister,
And great blue spots where the ink has run,
And reddish streaks that wink and glister
O'er the page so beautifully yellow—
Oh, well have the droppings played their
tricks !
Did he guess how toadstools grow, this
fellow ?
Here's one stuck in his chapter six !

VII.

How did he like it, when the live creatures
Tickled and toused and browsed him all
over,
And worm, slug, eft, with serious features,
Came in, each one, for his right of trover ;
When the water-beetle with great blind deaf
face
Made of her eggs the stately deposit,
And the newt borrowed just so much of the
preface
As tiled in the top of his black wife's closet.

VIII.

All that life, and fun, and romping,
All that frisking, and twisting. and
coupling.

While slowly our poor friend's leaves were
 swamping,
And clasps were cracking, and covers
 suppling !
As if you had carried sour John Knox
 To the play-house at Paris, Vienna, or
 Munich,
Fastened him into a front-row box,
And danced off the Ballet with trousers
 and tunic.

IX.

Come, old martyr ! What, torment enough
 is it ?
Back to my room shall you take your
 sweet self !
Good - bye, mother - beetle ; husband - eft,
 sufficit !
See the snug niche I have made on my
 shelf :
A.'s book shall prop you up, B.'s shall cover
 you,
Here's C. to be grave with, or D. to be
 gay,
And with E. on each side, and F. right
 over you,
Dry-rot at ease till the Judgment-day !

THE LABORATORY.

[ANCIEN RÉGIME]

I.

Now that I, tying thy glass mask tightly,
May gaze thro' these faint smokes curling
 whitely,
As thou pliest thy trade in this devil's
 smithy—
Which is the poison to poison her, prithee?

II.

He is with her ; and they know that I know
Where they are, what they do : they believe
 my tears flow
While they laugh, laugh at me, at me fled
 to the drear
Empty church, to pray God in, for them !—
 I am here.

III.

Grind away, moisten and mash up thy paste,
Pound at thy powder,—I am not in haste !
Better sit thus, and observe thy strange
 things, :
Than go where men wait me and dance at
 the King's.

IV.

That in the mortar—you call it a gum?
Ah, the brave tree whence such gold oozings
 come!
And yonder soft phial, the exquisite blue,
Sure to taste sweetly,—is that poison too?

V.

Had I but all of them, thee and thy treasures,
What a wild crowd of invisible pleasures!
To carry pure death in an earring, a casket,
A signet, a fan-mount, a filigree-basket!

VI.

Soon, at the King's, a mere lozenge to give
And Pauline should have just thirty minutes
 to live!
But to light a pastille, and Elise, with her
 head,
And her breast, and her arms, and her hands,
 should drop dead!

VII.

Quick—is it finished? The colour's too grim!
Why not soft like the phial's, enticing and
 dim?
Let it brighten her drink, let her turn it and
 stir,
And try it and taste, ere she fix and prefer!

VIII.

What a drop! She's not little, no minion
like me—
That's why she ensnared him: this never
will free
The soul from those strong, great eyes,—
say, "no!"
To that pulse's magnificent come-and-go.

IX.

For only last night, as they whispered, I
brought
My own eyes to bear on her so, that I thought
Could I keep them one half minute fixed, she
would fall,
Shrivelled; she fell not; yet this does it all!

X.

Not that I bid you spare her the pain!
Let death be felt and the proof remain;
Brand, burn up, bite into its grace—
He is sure to remember her dying face!

XI.

Is it done? Take my mask off! Nay, be
not morose,
It kills her, and this prevents seeing it close:
The delicate droplet, my whole fortune's fee—
If it hurts her, beside, can it ever hurt me?

XII.

Now, take all my jewels, gorge gold to your
fill,
You may kiss me, old man, on my mouth if
you will !
But brush this dust off me, lest horror it
brings
Ere I know it—next moment I dance at the
King's !

THE CONFESSIONAL.

[SPAIN.]

I.

It is a lie—their Priests, their Pope,
Their Saints, their . . . all they fear or hope
Are lies, and lies—there ! thro' my door
And ceiling, there ! and walls and floor,
There, lies, they lie, shall still be hurled,
Till spite of them I reach the world !

II.

You think Priests just and holy men !
Before they put me in this den,
I was a human creature too,
With flesh and blood like one of you,
A girl that laughed in beauty's pride
Like lilies in your world outside.

III.

I had a lover—shame avaunt !
This poor wrenched body, grim and gaunt,
Was kissed all over till it burned,
By lips the truest, love e'er turned
His heart's own tint : one night they kissed
My soul out in a burning mist.

IV.

So, next day when the accustomed train
Of things grew round my sense again,
“ That is a sin,” I said—and slow
With downcast eyes to church I go,
And pass to the confession-chair,
And tell the old mild father there.

V.

But when I falter Beltran's name,
“ Ha ? ” quoth the father ; “ much I blame
“ The sin ; yet wherefore idly grieve ?
“ Despair not,—strenuously retrieve !
“ Nay, I will turn this love of thine
“ To lawful love, almost divine.

VI.

“ For he is young, and led astray,
“ This Beltran, and he schemes, men say,
“ To change the laws of church and state ;
“ So, thine shall be an angel's fate,

"Who, ere the thunder breaks, should
roll
"Its cloud away and save his soul.

VII.

"For, when he lies upon thy breast,
"Thou mayst demand and be possessed
"Of all his plans, and next day steal
"To me, and all those plans reveal,
"That I and every priest, to purge
"His soul, may fast and use the scourge."

VIII.

That father's beard was long and white,
With love and truth his brow seemed
bright ;
I went back, all on fire with joy,
And, that same evening, bade the boy,
Tell me, as lovers should, heart-free,
Something to prove his love of me.

IX.

He told me what he would not tell
For hope of Heaven or fear of Hell ;
And I lay listening in such pride,
And, soon as he had left my side,
Tripped to the church by morning-light
To save his soul in his despite.

X.

I told the father all his schemes,
Who were his comrades, what their dreams ;
“ And now make haste,” I said, “ to pray
“ The one spot from his soul away ;
“ To-night he comes, but not the same
“ Will look ! ” At night he never came.

XI.

Nor next night : on the after-morn,
I went forth with a strength new-born :
The church was empty ; something drew
My steps into the street ; I knew
It led me to the market-place—
Where, lo,—on high—the father’s face !

XII.

That horrible black scaffold drest—
The stapled block . . . God sink the rest !
That head strapped back, that blinding vest,
Those knotted hands and naked breast—
Till near one busy hangman pressed—
And—on the neck these arms caressed. . . .

XIII.

No part in aught they hope or fear !
No Heaven with them, no Hell,—and here,
No Earth, not so much space as pens
My body in their worst of dens
But shall bear God and Man my cry—
Lies—lies, again—and still, they lie !

EVELYN HOPE.

I.

BEAUTIFUL Evelyn Hope is dead !

Sit and watch by her side an hour.
That is her book-shelf, this her bed ;
She plucked that piece of geranium-
flower,
Beginning to die too, in the glass.
Little has yet been changed, I think—
The shutters are shut, no light may pass
Save two long rays thro' the hinge's chink.

II.

Sixteen years old when she died !

Perhaps she had scarcely heard my
name—
It was not her time to love : beside,
Her life had many a hope and aim,
Duties enough and little cares,
And now was quiet, now astir—
Till God's hand beckoned unawares,
And the sweet white brow is all of her.

III.

It is too late then, Evelyn Hope ?

What, your soul was pure and true,
The good stars met in your horoscope,
Made you of spirit, fire and dew—

And just because I was thrice as old,
And our paths in the world diverged so
wide,
Each was nought to each, must I be told?
We were fellow mortals, nought beside?

IV.

No, indeed! for God above
Is great to grant, as mighty to make,
And creates the love to reward the love,—
I claim you still, for my own love's
sake!
Delayed it may be for more lives yet,
Through worlds I shall traverse, not a
few—
Much is to learn and much to forget
Ere the time be come for taking you.

V.

But the time will come,—at last it will,
When, Evelyn Hope, what meant, I shall
say,
In the lower earth, in the years long still,
That body and soul so pure and gay?
Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,
And your mouth of your own geranium's
red—
And what would you do with me, in fine,
In the new life come in the old one's
stead.

VI.

I have lived, I shall say, so much since then,
Given up myself so many times,
Gained me the gains of various men,
Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes ;
Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full scope,
Either I missed or itself missed me—
And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope !
What is the issue ? let us see !

VII.

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while ;
My heart seemed full as it could hold—
There was place and to spare for the frank
young smile
And the red young mouth and the hair's
young gold.
So, hush,—I will give you this leaf to keep—
See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand.
There, that is our secret ! go to sleep ;
You will wake, and remember, and under-
stand.

A WOMAN'S LAST WORD.

I.

LET's contend no more, Love,
Strive nor weep—
All be as before, Love,
—Only sleep !

II.

What so wild as words are ?
—I and thou
In debate as birds are,
Hawk on bough !

III.

See the creature stalking
While we speak—
Hush and hide the talking,
Cheek on cheek !

IV.

What so false as truth is,
False to thee ?
Where the serpent's tooth is,
Shun the tree—

V.

Where the apple reddens
Never pry—
Lest we lose our Edens,
Eve and I !

VI.

Be a god and hold me
With a charm—
Be a man and fold me
With thine arm !

VII.

Teach me, only teach, Love !
As I ought
I will speak thy speech, Love,
Think thy thought—

VIII.

Meet, if thou require it,
Both demands,
Laying flesh and spirit
In thy hands !

IX.

That shall be to-morrow
Not to-night :
I must bury sorrow
Out of sight,

X.

—Must a little weep, Love,
Foolish me !
And so fall asleep, Love,
Loved by thee.

MY STAR.

ALL that I know
Of a certain star,
Is, it can throw
(Like the angled spar)

Now a dart of red,
Now a dart of blue,
Till my friends have said
They would fain see, too,
My star that dartles the red and the blue !
Then it stops like a bird,—like a flower,
hangs furl'd,
They must solace themselves with the
Saturn above it.
What matter to me if their star is a
world ?
Mine has opened its soul to me ; therefore
I love it.

“CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK TOWER CAME.”

(See Edgar's song in “Lear.”)

I.

My first thought was, he lied in every
word,
That hoary cripple, with malicious eye
Askance to watch the working of his
lie
On mine, and mouth scarce able to afford
Suppression of the glee that purs'd and
scored
Its edge at one more victim gained thereby.

II.

What else should he be set for, with his staff?
 What, save to waylay with his lies, ensnare
 All travellers that might find him posted
 there,
 And ask the road? I guessed what skull-
 like laugh
 Would break, what crutch 'gin write my
 epitaph
 For pastime in the dusty thoroughfare,

III.

If at his counsel I should turn aside
 Into that ominous tract which, all agree,
 Hides the Dark Tower. Yet acquiescingly
 I did turn as he pointed; neither pride
 Nor hope rekindling at the end descried,
 So much as gladness that some end should
 be.

IV.

For, what with my whole world-wide wander-
 ing,
 What with my search drawn out thro'
 years, my hope
 Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope
 With that obstreperous joy success would
 bring,—
 I hardly tried now to rebuke the spring
 My heart made, finding failure in its scope.

V.

As when a sick man very near to death
Seems dead indeed, and feels begin and end
The tears and takes the farewell of each
friend
And hears one bid the other go, draw breath
Freelier outside, ("since all is o'er," he saith,
"And the blow fall'n no grieving can
amend").

VI.

While some discuss if near the other graves
Be room enough for this, and when a day
Suits best for carrying the corpse away,
With care about the banners, scarves and
staves,
And still the man hears all, and only craves
He may not shame such tender love and
stay.

VII.

Thus, I had so long suffered in this quest,
Heard failure prophesied so oft, been writ
So many times among "The Band"—to
wit,
The knights who to the Dark Tower's search
addressed
Their steps—that just to fail as they, seemed
best,
And all the doubt was now—should I
be fit?

VIII.

So, quiet as despair, I turned from him,
That hateful cripple, out of his highway
Into the path he pointed. All the day
Had been a dreary one at best, and dim
Was settling to its close, yet shot one
grim
Red leer to see the plain catch its estray.

IX.

For mark ! no sooner was I fairly found
Pledged to the plain, after a pace or two,
Than pausing to throw backward a last
view
To the safe road, 'twas gone ! gray plain all
round !
Nothing but plain to the horizon's bound.
I might go on ; nought else remained to do.

X.

So on I went. I think I never saw
Such starved ignoble nature ; nothing
throve :
For flowers—as well expect a cedar grove !
But cockle, spurge, according to their law
Might propagate their kind, with none to
awe,
You'd think : a burr had been a treasure-
trove.

XI.

No ! penury, inertness, and grimace,
In some strange sort, were the land's
portion. " See
Or shut your eyes "—said Nature peevishly—
" It nothing skills : I cannot help my case :
The Judgment's fire alone can cure this place,
Calcine its clods and set my prisoners free."

XII.

If there pushed any ragged thistle-stalk
Above its mates, the head was chopped—
the bents
Were jealous else. What made those holes
and rents
In the dock's harsh swarth leaves—bruised
as to baulk
All hope of greenness ? 'tis a brute must walk
Pashing their life out, with a brute's
intentions.

XIII.

As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair
In leprosy—thin dry blades pricked the
mud
Which underneath looked kneaded up with
blood.
One stiff blind horse, his every bone a-stare,
Stood stupefied, however he came there—
Thrust out past service from the devil's
stud !

xiv.

Alive? he might be dead for all I know,
With that red gaunt and colloped neck
a-strain,
And shut eyes underneath the rusty mane.
Seldom went such grotesqueness with such
woe :
I never saw a brute I hated so—
He must be wicked to deserve such pain.

xv.

I shut my eyes and turned them on my heart.
As a man calls for wine before he fights,
I asked one draught of earlier, happier
sights
Ere fitly I could hope to play my part.
Think first, fight afterwards—the soldier's
art :
One taste of the old times sets all to rights !

xvi.

Not it ! I fancied Cuthbert's reddening face
Beneath its garniture of curly gold,
Dear fellow, till I almost felt him fold
An arm in mine to fix me to the place,
That way he used. Alas ! one night's
disgrace !
Out went my heart's new fire and left it
cold.

XVII.

Giles, then, the soul of honour—there he
stands
Frank as ten years ago when knighted first.
What honest men should dare (he said) he
durst.
Good—but the scene shifts—faugh! what
hangman's hand
Pin to his breast a parchment? his own
bands
Read it. Poor traitor, spit upon and
curst!

XVIII.

Better this present than a past like that—
Back therefore to my darkening path again.
No sound, no sight as far as eye could
strain.
Will the night send a howlet or a bat?
I asked: when something on the dismal flat
Came to arrest my thoughts and change
their train.

XIX.

A sudden little river crossed my path
As unexpected as a serpent comes.
No sluggish tide congenial to the glooms—
This, as it frothed by, might have been a
bath

For the fiend's glowing hoof—to see the
wrath
Or its black eddy bespate with flakes
and spumes.

XX.

So petty yet so spiteful ! all along,
Low scrubby alders kneeled down over it ;
Drenched willows flung them headlong in
a fit
Or mute despair, a suicidal throng :
The river which had done them all the
wrong,
Whate'er that was, rolled by, deterred
no whit.

XXI.

Which, while I forded,—good saints, how
I feared
To set my foot upon a dead man's cheek,
Each step, or feel the spear I thrust to
seek
For hollows, tangled in his hair or beard !
—It may have been a water-rat I speared,
But, ugh ! it sounded like a baby's shriek.

XXII.

Glad was I when I reached the other bank.
Now for a better country. Vain presage !
Who were the strugglers, what war did
they wage

Whose savage trample thus could pad the
dank
Soil to a plash? toads in a poisoned tank,
Or wild cats in a red-hot iron cage—

XXIII.

The fight must so have seemed in that fell
cirque.
What kept them there, with all the plain
to choose?
No foot-print leading to that horrid
mews,
None out of it: mad brewage set to work
Their brains, no doubt, like galley-slaves
the Turk
Pits for his pastime, Christians against
Jews.

XXIV.

And more than that—a furlong on—why,
there!
What bad use was that engine for,
that wheel,
Or brake, not wheel—that harrow fit to
reel
Men's bodies out like silk? with all the
air
Of Tophet's tool, on earth left unaware,
Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth of
steel

XXV.

Then came a bit of stubbed ground, once
a wood,
Next a marsh, it would seem, and now
mere earth
Desperate and done with ; (so a fool finds
mirth,
Makes a thing and then mars it, till his
mood
Changes and off he goes !) within a rood
Bog, clay and rubble, sand and stark black
dearth.

XXVI.

Now blotches rankling, coloured gay and
grim,
Now patches where some leanness of the
soil's
Broke into moss or substances like boils ;
Then came some palsied oak, a cleft in
him
Like a distorted mouth that splits its rim
Gaping at death, and dies while it recoils.

XXVII.

And just as far as ever from the end
Nought in the distance but the evening,
nought
To point my footstep further ! At the
thought,

A great black bird, Apollyon's bosom-
friend,
Sailed past, nor beat his wide wing dragon-
penned
That brushed my cap—perchance the guide
I sought.

XXVIII.

For looking up, aware I somehow grew,
'Spite of the dusk, the plain had given
place
All round to mountains—with such name
to grace
Mere ugly heights and heaps now stol'n in
view.
How thus they had surprised me,—solve it,
you!
How to get from them was no plainer
case.

XXIX.

Yet half I seemed to recognise some trick
Of mischief happened to me, God knows
when—
In a bad dream perhaps. Here ended,
then,
Progress this way. When, in the very
nick
Of giving up, one time more, came a click
As when a trap shuts—you're inside the
den!

xxx.

Burningly it came on me all at once,
This was the place ! those two hills on
the right
Crouched like two bulls locked horn in horn
in fight—
While to the left, a tall scalped mountain . . .
Dunce,
Fool, to be dozing at the very nonce,
After a life spent training for the sight !

xxxi.

What in the midst lay but the Tower itself ?
The round squat turret, blind as the fool's
heart,
Built of brown stone, without a counter-
part
In the whole world. The tempest's mocking
elf
Points to the shipman thus the unseen shelf
He strikes on, only when the timbers start.

! xxxii.

Not see ? because of night perhaps ?—Why,
day
Came back again for that ! before it
left,
The dying sunset kindled through a
cleft :

The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay—
Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay,—
“Now stab and end the creature—to the
heft !”

xxxiii.

Not hear? when noise was everywhere?
it tolled
Increasing like a bell. Names in my ears,
Of all the lost adventurers my peers,—
How such a one was strong, and such was
bold,
And such was fortunate, yet each of old
Lost, lost! one moment knelled the woe
of years.

xxxiv.

There they stood, ranged along the hill-sides
—met
To view the last of me, a living frame
For one more picture! in a sheet of flame
I saw them and I knew them all. And yet
Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set
And blew. “*Childe Roland to the Dark
Tower came.*”

THE STATUE AND THE BUST.

THERE'S a palace in Florence, the world
knows well,
And a statue watches it from the square,
And this story of both do the townsmen tell.

Ages ago, a lady there,
At the farthest window facing the east
Asked, "Who rides by with the royal air?"

The bridesmaids' prattle around her ceased ;
She leaned forth, one on either hand ;
They saw how the blush of the bride increased—

They felt by its beats her heart expand—
As one at each ear and both in a breath
Whispered, "The Great-Duke Ferdinand.

That selfsame instant, underneath,
The Duke rode past in his idle way,
Empty and fine like a swordless sheath

Gay he rode, with a friend as gay,
Till he threw his head back—"Who is she?"
—"A Bride the Riccardi brings home to-day."

Hair in heaps laid heavily
Over a pale brow spirit-pure—
Carved like the heart of the coal-black tree,

Crisped like a war-steed's encloüre—
Which vainly sought to dissemble her eyes
Of the blackest black our eyes endure.

And lo, a blade for a knight's emprise
Filled the fine empty sheath of a man,—
The Duke grew straightway brave and wise.

He looked at her, as a lover can ;
She looked at him, as one who awakes,—
The past was a sleep, and her life began.

As love so ordered for both their sakes,
A feast was held that selfsame night
In the pile which the mighty shadow makes.

(For Via Larga is three-parts light,
But the Palace overshadows one,
Because of a crime which may God requite !

To Florence and God the wrong was done,
Through the first republic's murder there
By Cosimo and his cursed son.)

The Duke (with the statue's face in the square)
Turned in the midst of his multitude
At the bright approach of the bridal pair.

Face to face the lovers stood
A single minute and no more,
While the bridegroom bent as a man sub-
 dued—

Bowed till his bonnet brushed the floor—
For the Duke on the lady a kiss conferred,
As the courtly custom was of yore.

In a minute can lovers exchange a word ?
If a word did pass, which I do not think,
Only one out of the thousand heard.

That was the bridegroom. At day's brink
He and his bride were alone at last
In a bed-chamber by a taper's blink.

Calmly he said that her lot was cast,
That the door she had passed was shut on her
Till the final catafalk repassed.

The world meanwhile, its noise and stir,
Through a certain window facing the east
She might watch like a convent's chronicler.

Since passing the door might lead to a feast,
And a feast might lead to so much beside,
He, of many evils, chose the least. .

"Freely I choose too," said the bride—
"Your window and its world suffice."
So replied the tongue, while the heart re-
plied—

"I, I spend the night with that devil twice,
May his window serve as my loop of hell
Whence a damned soul looks on Paradise !

"I fly to the Duke who loves me well,
Sit by his side and laugh at sorrow !
Ere I count another ave-bell.

"'Tis only the coat of a page to borrow,
And tie my hair in a horse-boy's trim,
And I save my soul—but not to-morrow"—

(She checked herself and her eye grew dim)—
“My father tarries to bless my state :
I must keep it one day more for him.

“Is one day more so long to wait ?
Moreover the Duke rides past, I know—
We shall see each other, sure as fate.”

She turned on her side and slept. Just so !
So we resolve on a thing and sleep.
So did the lady, ages ago.

That night the Duke said, “Dear or cheap
As the cost of this cup of bliss may prove
To body or soul, I will drain it deep !”

And on the morrow, bold with love,
He beckoned the bridegroom (close on call,
As his duty bade, by the Duke’s alcove)

And smiled “’Twas a very funeral
Your lady will think, this feast of ours,
A shame to efface, whate’er befall !

“What if we break from the Arno bowers,
And let Petraja, cool and green,
Cure last night’s fault with this morning’s
flowers ?”

The bridegroom, not a thought to be seen
On his steady brow and quiet mouth,
Said, “Too much favour for me so mean !

"Alas! my lady leaves the south.
Each wind that comes from the Apennine
Is a menace to her tender youth.

"No way exists, the wise opine,
If she quits her palace twice this year,
To avert the flower of life's decline."

Quoth the Duke, "A sage and a kindly fear.
Moreover Petraja is cold this spring—
Be our feast to-night as usual here!"

And then to himself—"Which night shall
bring
Thy bride to her lover's embraces, fool—
Or am I the fool, and thou art his king!"

"Yet my passion must wait a night, nor cool—
For to-night the Envoy arrives from France,
Whose heart I unlock with thyself, my tool.

"I need thee still and might miss perchance.
To-day is not wholly lost, beside,
With its hope of my lady's countenance—

"For I ride—what should I do but ride?
And passing her palace, if I list,
May glance at its window—well betide!"

So said, so done: nor the lady missed
One ray that broke from the ardent brow,
Nor a curl of the lips where the spirit kissed.

Be sure that each renewed the vow,
No morrow's sun should arise and set
And leave them then as it left them now.

But next day passed, and next day yet,
With still fresh cause to wait one more
Ere each leaped over the parapet.

And still, as love's brief morning wore,
With a gentle start, half smile, half sigh,
They found love not as it seemed before.

They thought it would work infallibly,
But not in despite of heaven and earth—
The rose would blow when the storm
passed by.

Meantime they could profit in winter's dearth
By winter's fruits that supplant the rose :
The world and its ways have a certain worth !

And to press a point while these oppose
Were a simple policy—best wait,
And lose no friends and gain no foes.

Meanwhile, worse fates than a lover's fate,
Who daily may ride and lean and look
Where his lady watches behind the grate !

And she—she watched the square like a book
Holding one picture and only one,
Which daily to find she undertook.

When the picture was reached the book was
done,
And she turned from it a night to scheme
Of tearing it out for herself next sun.

Weeks grew months, years—gleam by gleam
The glory dropped from youth and love,
And both perceived they had dreamed a dream,

Which hovered as dreams do, still above,
But who can take a dream for truth ?
Oh, hide our eyes from the next remove !

One day as the lady saw her youth
Depart, and the silver thread that streaked
Her hair, and, worn by the serpent's tooth,

The brow so puckered, the chin so peaked,—
And wondered who the woman was,
So hollow-eyed and haggard-cheeked,

Fronting her silent in the glass—
“ Summon here,” she suddenly said,
“ Before the rest or my old self pass,

“ Him, the Carver, a hand to aid,
Who moulds the clay no love will change,
And fixes a beauty never to fade.

“ Let Robbia's craft so apt and strange
Arrest the remains of young and fair,
And rivet them while the seasons range

“ Make me a face on the window there
Waiting as ever, mute the while,
My love to pass below in the square !

“ And let me think that it may beguile
Dreary days which the dead must spend
Down in their darkness under the aisle—

“ To say,—‘ What matters at the end ?
I did no more while my heart was warm,
Than does that image, my pale-faced friend.’

“ Where is the use of the lip’s red charm,
The heaven of hair, the pride of the brow,
And the blood that blues the inside arm—

Unless we turn, as the soul knows how,
The earthly gift to an end divine ?
A lady of clay is as good, I trow,”

But long ere Robbia’s cornice, fine
With flowers and fruits which leaves enlace,
Was set where now is the empty shrine—

(With, leaning out of a bright blue space,
As a ghost might from a chink of sky
The passionate pale lady’s face—

Eyeing ever with earnest eye
And quick-turned neck at its breathless stretch,
Some one who ever passes by—)

The Duke sighed like the simplest wretch
In Florence, "So, my dream escapes!
Will its record stay?" And he bade them fetch

Some subtle fashioner of shapes—
"Can the soul, the will, die out of a man
Ere his body find the grave that gapes?

"John of Douay shall work my plan,
Mould me on horseback here aloft,
Alive—(the subtle artisan!)

"In the very square I cross so oft!
That men may admire, when future suns
Shall touch the eyes to a purpose soft,

"While the mouth and the brow are brave
in bronze—
Admire and say, 'When he was alive,
How he would take his pleasure once!'

"And it shall go hard but I contrive
To listen meanwhile and laugh in my tomb
At indolence which aspires to strive."

So! while these wait the trump of doom,
How do their spirits pass, I wonder,
Nights and days in the narrow room?

Still, I suppose, they sit and ponder
What a gift life was, ages ago,
Six steps out of the chapel yonder.

Surely they see not God, I know,
Nor all that chivalry of His,
The soldier-saints who, row on row,

Burn upward each to his point of bliss—
Since, the end of life being manifest,
He had cut his way thro' the world to
this.

I hear your reproach—"But delay was best,
For their end was a crime!"—Oh, a crime
will do
As well, I reply, to serve for a test,

As a virtue golden through and through,
Sufficient to vindicate itself
And prove its worth at a moment's view.

Must a game be played for the sake
pelf?
Where a button goes, 'twere an epigram
To offer the stamp of the very Guelph.

The true has no value beyond the sham.
As well the counter as coin, I submit,
When your table's a hat, and your prize, a
dram.

Stake your counter as boldly every whit,
Venture as truly, use the same skill,
Do your best, whether winning or losing it,

If you choose to play—is my principle !
Let a man contend to the uttermost
For his life's set prize, be it what it will !

The counter our lovers staked was lost
As surely as if it were lawful coin :
And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost

Was, the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,
Though the end in sight was a crime, I say.
You of the virtue, (we issue join)
How strive you ? *De te, fabula !*

OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE.

I.

THE morn when first it thunders in March,
The eel in the pond gives a leap, they say.
As I leaned and looked over the aloed arch
Of the villa-gate, this warm March day,
No flash snapt, no dumb thunder rolled
In the valley beneath, where, white and wide,
Washed by the morning's water-gold,
Florence lay out on the mountain-side.

II.

River and bridge and street and square
Lay mine, as much at my beck and call,
Through the live translucent bath of air,
As the sights in a magic crystal ball.

And of all I saw and of all I praised,
The most to praise and the best to see,
Was the startling bell-tower Giotto raised
But why did it more than startle me?

III.

Giotto, how, with that soul of yours,
Could you play me false who loved you so?
Some slights if a certain heart endures
It feels, I would have your fellows know!
'Faith—I perceive not why I should care
To break a silence that suits them best,
But the thing grows somewhat hard to bear
When I find a Giotto join the rest.

IV.

On the arch where olives overhead
Print the blue sky with twig and leaf,
(That sharp-curled leaf they never shed)
'Twixt the aloes I used to lean in chief,
And mark through the winter afternoons,
By a gift God grants me now and then,
In the mild decline of those suns like moons,
Who walked in Florence, besides her men.

V.

They might chirp and chaffer, come and go
For pleasure or profit, her men alive—
My business was hardly with them, I trow,
But with empty cells of the human hive;

—With the chapter-room, the cloister-porch,
The church's apsis, aisle or nave,
Its crypt, one fingers along with a torch—
Its face set nill for the sun to shave.

VI.

Wherever a fresco peels and drops,
Wherever an outline weakens and wanes
Till the latest life in the painting stops,
Stands One whom each fainter pulse-tick
pains !
One, wishful each scrap should clutch its brick,
Each tinge not wholly escape the plaster,
—A lion who dies of an ass's kick,
The wronged great soul of an ancient
Master.

VII.

For oh, this world and the wrong it does !
They are safe in heaven with their backs
to it,
The Michaels and Rafaels, you hum and buzz
Round the works of, you of the little wit !
Do their eyes contract to the earth's old scope
Now that they see God face to face,
And have all attained to be poets, I hope ?
'Tis their holiday now, in any case.

VIII.

Much they reckon of your praise and you !
But the wronged great souls—can they be
quit

Or a world where all their work is to do,
 Where you style them, you of the little wit,
 Old Master this and Early the other,
 Not dreaming that Old and New are fellows,
 That a younger succeeds to an elder brother,
 Da Vincis derive in good time from Dellos.

IX.

And here where your praise would yield
 returns
 And a handsome word or two give help,
 Here, after your kind, the mastiff girns
 And the puppy pack of poodles yelp.
 What, not a word for Stefano there
 —Of how once prominent and starry,
 Called Nature's ape and the world's despair
 For his peerless painting (see Vasari)?

X.

There he stands now. Study, my friends,
 What a man's work comes to! so he
 plans it,
 Performs it, perfects it, makes amends
 For the toiling and moiling, and there's its
 transit!
 Happier the thrifty blind-folk labour,
 With upturned eye while the band is busy,
 Not sidling a glance at the coin of their
 neighbour!
 'Tis looking downward makes one dizzy.

XI.

If you knew their work you would deal your
dole,

May I take upon me to instruct you ?

When Greek Art ran and reached the goal,
Thus much had the world to boast *in*
fructu—

The truth of Man, as by God first spoken,
Which the actual generations garble,
Was re-uttered,—and Soul (which Limbs
betoken)

And Limbs (Soul informs) were made new
in marble.

XII.

So you saw yourself as you wished you were,
As you might have been, as you cannot be ;
And bringing your own shortcomings there,
You grew content in your poor degree
With your little power, by those statues'
godhead,

And your little scope, by their eyes' full sway,
And your little grace, by their grace embodied,
And your little dates, by their forms that
stay.

XIII.

You would fain be kinglier, say than I am ?
Even so, you will not sit like Theseus.
You'd fain be a model ? the Son of Priam
Has yet the advantage in arms' and knees'
use.

You're wroth—can you slay your snake like
Apollo?

You're grieved—still Niobe's the grander !
You live—there's the Racers' frieze to follow—
You die—there's the dying Alexander.

XIV.

So, testing your weakness by their strength,
Your meagre charms by their rounded
beauty,
Measured by Art in your breadth and length,
You learn—to submit is the worsted's duty.
—When I say “you” 'tis the common soul,
The collective, I mean—the race of Man
That receives life in parts to live in a whole,
And grow here according to God's own
plan.

XV.

Growth came when, looking your last on
them all,
You turned your eyes inwardly one fine
day
And cried with a start—What if we so small
Are greater, ay, greater the while than
they !
Are they perfect of lineament, perfect of
stature?
In both, of such lower types are we
Precisely because of our wider nature ;
For time, theirs—theirs—for eternity.

XVI.

To-day's brief passion limits their range,
It seethes with the morrow for us and more.
They are perfect—how else? they shall never
change :

We are faulty—why not? we have time in
store.

The Artificer's hand is not arrested
With us—we are rough-hewn, nowise
polished :

They stand for our copy, and, once invested
With all they can teach, we shall see them
abolished.

XVII.

'Tis a life-long toil till our lump be leaven—
The better! what's come to perfection
perishes.

Things learned on earth, we shall practise in
heaven .

Works done least rapidly, Art most
cherishes.

Thyself shall afford the example, Giotto !
'Thy one work, not to decrease or diminish,
Done at a stroke, was just (was it not?) "O!"
Thy great Campanile is still to finish.

XVIII.

Is it true, we are now, and shall be hereafter,
And what—is depending on life's one
minute?

Hails heavenly cheer or infernal laughter
Our first step out of the gulf or in it?
And Man, this step within his endeavour,
His face, have no more play and action
Than joy which is crystallised for ever,
Or grief, an eternal petrification !

XIX.

On which I conclude, that the early painters,
To cries of "Greek Art and what more
wish you?"—
Replied "Become now self-acquainters,
And paint man, man,—whatever the issue !
Make the hopes shine through the flesh they
fray,
New fears aggrandise the rags and tatters.
So bring the invisible full into play,
Let the visible go to the dogs—what
matters?"

XX

Give these, I say, full honour and glory
For daring so much, before they well did it,
The first of the new, in our race's story,
Beats the last of the old, 'tis no idle quiddit.
The worthies began a revolution
Which if on the earth we intend to
acknowledge
Honour them now—(ends my allocution)
Nor confer our degree when the folks leave
college.

XXI.

There's a fancy some lean to and others hate—
That, when this life is ended, begins
New work for the soul in another state,
Where it strives and gets weary, loses and
wins—
Where the strong and the weak, this world's
congeries,
Repeat in large what they practised in small,
Through life after life in unlimited series ;
Only the scale's to be changed, that's all.

XXII.

Yet I hardly know. When a soul has seen
By the means of Evil that Good is best,
And through earth and its noise, what is
heaven's serene,—
When its faith in the same has stood the
test—
Why, the child grown man, you burn the
rod,
The uses of labour are surely done.
There remaineth a rest for the people of God,
And I have had troubles enough for one.

XXIII.

But at any rate I have loved the season
Of Art's spring-birth so dim and dewy ;
My sculptor is Nicolo the Pisan,
My painter—who but Cimabue ?

Nor ever was man of them all indeed,
From these to Ghiberti and Ghirlandajo,
Could say that he missed my critic-meed.
So now to my special grievance—heigh-ho!

XXIV.

Their ghosts now stand, as I said before,
Watching each fresco flaked and rasped,
Blocked up, knocked out, or white-washed o'er
—No getting again what the church has
grasped!
The works on the wall must take their
chance,
“Works never conceded to England's
thick clime!”
(I hope they prefer their inheritance
Of a bucketful of Italian quick lime.)

XXV.

When they go at length, with such a shaking
Of heads o'er the old delusions, sadly
Each master his way through the black
streets taking,
Where many a lost work breathes though
badly—
Why don't they bethink them of who has
merited?
Why not reveal, while their pictures dree
Such doom, that a captive's to be out-
ferreted?
Why do they never remember me?

XXVI.

Not that I expect the great Bigordi
Nor Sandro to hear me, chivalric, bellicose ;
Nor wronged Lippino—and not a word I
Say of a scrap of Fra Angelico's.
But are you too fine, Taddeo Gaddi,
To grant me a taste of your intonaco—
Some Jerome that seeks the heaven with a
sad eye ?
No churlish saint, Lorenzo Monaco ?

XXVII.

Could not the ghost with the close red cap,
My Pollajolo, the twice a craftsman,
Save me a sample, give me the hap
Of a muscular Christ that shows the
draughtsman ?
No Virgin by him, the somewhat petty,
Of finical touch and tempera crumbly —
Could not Alesso Baldovinetti
Contribute so much, I ask him humbly ?

XXVIII.

Margheritone of Arezzo,
With the grove-clothes garb and swaddling
barret,
(Why purse up mouth and beak in a pet so,
You bald, saturnine, poll-clawed parrot ?)
No poor glimmering Crucifixion,
Where in the foreground kneels the donor ?
If such remain, as is my conviction,
The hoarding does you but little honour.

XXIX.

They pass : for them the panels may thrill,
 The tempera grow alive and tinglish—
 Rot or are left to the mercies still
 Of dealers and stealers, Jews and the
 English !
 Seeing mere money's worth in their prize,
 Who sell it to some one calm as Zeno
 At naked Art, and in ecstasies
 Before some clay-cold vile Carlino !

XXX.

No matter for these ! But Giotto, you,
 Have you allowed as the town-tongues
 babble it,
 Never ! it shall not be counted true—
 That a certain precious little tablet
 Which Buonarroti eyed like a lover,—
 Buried so long in oblivion's womb,
 Was left for another than I to discover—
 Turns up at last, and to whom ?—to whom ?

XXXI.

I, that have haunted the dim San Spirito,
 (Or was it rather the Ognissanti ?)
 Stood on the altar-steps, patient and weary
 too !
 Nay, I shall have it yet, *detur amanti* !
 My Koh-i-noor—or (if that's a platitude)
 Jewel of Głamschid, the Persian Sofi's eye !
 So, in anticipative gratitude,
 What if I take up my hope and prophesy ?

xxxii.

When the hour is ripe, and a certain dotard
Pitched, no parcel that needs invoicing,
To the worse side of the Mont St. Gothard,
Have, to begin by way of rejoicing,
None of that shooting the sky (blank
cartridge),
No civic guards, all plumes and lacquer,
Hunting Radetzky's soul like a partridge
Over Morello with squib and cracker.

xxxiii.

We'll shoot this time better game and bag
'em hot—
No display at the stone of Dante,
But a kind of Witan-agemot
("Casa Guidi," quod videas ante)
To ponder Freedom restored to Florence,
How Art may return that departed with her.
Go, hated house, go each trace of the
Lorraine's!
And bring us the days of Orgagna hither.

xxxiv.

How we shall prologue, how we shall
perorate,
Say fit things upon art and history—
Set truth at blood-heat and the false at a
zero rate,
Make of the want of the age no mystery!

Contrast the fructuous and sterile eras,
Show, monarchy its uncouth cub licks
Out of the bear's shape to the chimæra's—
Pure Art's birth being still the republic's !

xxxv.

Then one shall propose (in a speech, curt
Tuscan,
Sober, expurgate, spare of an "*issimo*,")
Ending our half-told tale of Cambuscan,
Turning the Bell-tower's altaltissimo.
And fine as the beak of a young beccaccia
The Campanile, the Duomo's fit ally,
Soars up in gold its full fifty braccia,
Completing Florence, as Florence, Italy.

xxxvi.

Shall I be alive that morning the scaffold
Is broken away, and the long-pent fire
Like the golden hope of the world unbaffled
Springs from its sleep, and up goes the
spire—
As, "God and the People" plain for its
motto,
Thence the new tricolor flaps at the sky?
Foresceing the day that vindicates Giotto
And Florence together, the first am I !

BY THE FIRESIDE.

I.

How well I know what I mean to do
When the long dark Autumn evening
come,
And where, my soul, is thy pleasant hue?
With the music of all thy voices, dumb
In life's November too!

II.

I shall be found by the fire, suppose,
O'er a great wise book as beseemeth age,
While the shutters flap as the cross-wind
blows,
And I turn the page, and I turn the page,
Not verse now, only prose!

III.

Till the young ones whisper, finger on lip,
"There he is at it, deep in Greek—
Now or never, then, out we slip
To cut from the hazels by the creek
A mainmast for our ship."

IV.

I shall be at it indeed, my friends!
Greek puts already on either side
Such a branch-work forth, as soon extends

To a vista opening far and wide,
And I pass out where it ends.

v.

The outside frame like your hazel-trees—
But the inside-archway narrows fast,
And a rarer sort succeeds to these,
And we slope to Italy at last
And youth, by green degrees.

vi.

I follow wherever I am led,
Knowing so well the leader's hand—
Oh, woman-country, wooed, not wed,
Loved all the more by earth's male-lands,
Laid to their hearts instead!

vii.

Look at the ruined chapel again
Half way up in the Alpine gorge.
Is that a tower, I point you plain,
Or is it a mill or an iron forge
Breaks solitude in vain?

viii.

A turn, and we stand in the heart of things;
The woods are round us, heaped and dim;
From slab to slab how it slips and springs,
The thread of water single and slim,
Thro' the ravage some torrent brings!

IX.

Does it feed the little lake below ?

That speck of white just on its marge
Is Pella : see, in the evening glow,

How sharp the silver spear-heads charge
When Alp meets Heaven in snow.

X.

On our other side is the straight-up rock ;

And a path is kept 'twixt the gorge and it
By boulder-stones where lichens mock

The marks on a moth, and small ferns fit
Their teeth to the polished block.

XI.

Oh, the sense of the yellow mountain flowers,

And the thorny balls, each three in one,
The chestnuts throw on our path in showers,

For the drop of the woodland fruit's begun
These early November hours—

XII.

That crimson the creeper's leaf across

Like a splash of blood, intense, abrupt,
O'er a shield, else gold from rim to boss,

And lay it for show on the fairy-cupped
Elf-needed mat of moss,

XIII.

By the rose-flesh mushrooms, undivulged

Last evening—nay, in to-day's first dew

Yon sudden coral nipple bulged
Where a freaked, fawn-coloured, flaky crew
Of toad-stools peep indulged.

XIV.

And yonder, at foot of the fronting ridge
That takes the turn to a range beyond,
Is the chapel reached by the one-arched bridge
Where the water is stopped in a stagnant
pond
Danced over by the midge.

XV.

The chapel and bridge are of stone alike,
Blackish gray and mostly wet ;
Cut hemp-stalks steep in the narrow dyke.
See here again, how the lichens fret
And the roots of the ivy strike !

XVI.

Poor little place, where its one priest comes
On a festa-day, if he comes at all,
'To the dozen folk from their scattered homes,
Gathered within that precinct small
By the dozen ways one roams

XVII.

To drop from the charcoal-burners' huts,
Or climb from the hemp-dressers' low shed,
Leave the grange where the woodman stores
his nuts,

Or the wattled cote where the fowlers spread
Their gear on the rock's bare iuts.

XVIII.

It has some pretension too, this front,
With its bit of fresco half-moonwise
Set over the porch, art's early wont—
'Tis John in the Desert, I surmise,
But has borne the weather's brunt—

XIX.

Not from the fault of the builder, though,
For a pent-house properly projects
Where three carved beams make a certain
show,
Dating—good thought of our architect's—
'Five, six, nine, he lets you know.

XX.

And all day long a bird sings there,
And a stray sheep drinks at the pond at times:
The place is silent and aware :
It has had its scenes, its joys and crimes,
But that is its own affair.

XXI.

My perfect wife, my Leonor,
Oh, heart my own, oh, eyes, mine too,
Whom else could I dare look backward for,
With whom beside should I dare pursue
The path gray heads abhor ?

XXII.

For it leads to a crag's sheer edge with them ;
Youth, flowery all the way, there stops—
Not they ; age threatens and they contemn,
Till they reach the gulf wherein youth drops,
One inch from our life's safe hem !

XXIII.

With me, youth led—I will speak now,
No longer watch you as you sit
Reading by fire-light, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it
Mutely—my heart knows how—

XXIV.

When, if I think but deep enough,
You are wont to answer, prompt as rhyme ;
And you, too, find without a rebuff
The response your soul seeks many a time
Piercing its fine flesh-stuff—

XXV.

My own, confirm me ! If I tread
This path back, is it not in pride
To think how little I dreamed it led
To an age so blest that by its side
Youth seems the waste instead !

XXVI.

My own, see where the years conduct !
At first, 'twas something our two souls

Should mix as mists do : each is sucked
Into each now ; on, the new stream rolls,
Whatever rocks obstruct.

xxvii.

Think, when our one soul understands
The great Word which makes all things
new—
When earth breaks up and Heaven expands—
How will the change strike me and you
In the House not made with hands ?

xxviii.

Oh, I must feel your brain prompt mine,
Your heart anticipate my heart, .
You must be just before, in fine,
See and make me see, for your part,
New depths of the Divine !

xxix.

But who could have expected this,
When we two drew together first
Just for the obvious human bliss,
To satisfy life's daily thirst
With a thing men seldom miss ?

xxx.

Come back with me to the first of all,
Let us lean and love it over again—
Let us now forget and then recall,
Break the rosary in a pearly rain,
And gather what we let fall !

XXXI.

What did I say?—that a small bird sings
All day long, save when a brown pair
Of hawks from the wood float with wide wings
Strained to a bell: 'gainst the noonday glare
You count the streaks and rings.

XXXII.

But at afternoon or almost eve
'Tis better; then the silence grows
To that degree, you half believe
It must get rid of what it knows,
Its bosom does so heave.

XXXIII.

Hither we walked, then, side by side,
Arm in arm and cheek to cheek,
And still I questioned or replied
While my heart, convulsed to really speak,
Lay choking in its pride.

XXXIV.

Silent the crumbling bridge we cross,
And pity and praise the chapel sweet,
And care about the fresco's loss,
And wish for our souls a like retreat,
And wonder at the moss.

XXXV.

Stoop and kneel on the settle under—
Look through the window's grated square:

Nothing to see ! for fear of plunder,
The cross is down and the altar bare,
As if thieves don't fear thunder.

xxxvi.

We stoop and look in through the grate,
See the little porch and rustic door,
Read duly the dead builder's date,
Then cross the bridge we crossed before,
Take the path again—but wait !

xxxvii.

Oh moment, one and infinite !
The water slips o'er stock and stone ;
The west is tender, hardly bright.
How gray at once is the evening grown.
One star, the chrysolite !

xxxviii.

We two stood there with never a third,
But each by each, as each knew well.
The sights we saw and the sounds we heard,
The lights and the shades made up a spell
Till the trouble grew and stirred.

xxxix.

Oh, the little more, and how much it is !
And the little less, and what worlds away !
How a sound shall quicken content to bliss,
Or a breath suspend the blood's best play,
And life be a proof of this !

xl.

Had she willed it, still had stood the screen
So slight, so sure, 'twixt my love and her.

L.

Be Hate that fruit or Love that fruit,
It forwards the General Deed of Man,
And each of the Many helps to recruit
The life of the race by a general plan,
Each living his own, to boot.

LI.

I am named and known by that hour's feat,
There took my station and degree.
So grew my own small life complete
As nature obtained her best of me—
One born to love you, sweet !

LII.

And to watch you sink by the fireside now
Back again, as you mutely sit
Musing by the fire-light, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it
Yonder, my heart knows how !

LIII.

So the earth has gained by one man more,
And the gain of earth must be Heaven's
gain too,
And the whole is well worth thinking o'er
When the autumn comes : which I mean
to do
One day, as I said before.



R. B.

Page 230.

"A great black bird, Apollyon's bosom-friend,
Sailed past."

TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA.

I.

I WONDER do you feel to-day
As I have felt, since, hand in hand,
We sat down on the grass, to stray
In spirit better through the land,
This morn of Rome and May?

II.

For me, I touched a thought, I know,
Has tantalised me many times,
(Like turns of thread the spiders throw
Mocking across our path) for rhymes
To catch at and let go.

III.

Help me to hold it : first it left
The yellowing fennel, run to seed
There, branching from the brick-work's cleft,
Some old tomb's ruin : yonder weed
Took up the floating weft.

IV.

Where one small orange cup amassed
Five beetles,—blind and green they grope

EARTH'S IMMORTALITIES

FAME.

SEE, as the prettiest graves will do in time,
Our poet's wants the freshness of its prime ;
Spite of the sexton's browsing horse, the
sods
Have struggled thro' its binding osier-rods ;
Headstone and half-sunk footstone lean
awry,
Wanting the brick-work promised by-and-by ;
How the minute gray lichens, plate o'er
plate,
Have softened down the crisp-cut name and
date !

LOVE.

So, the year's done with !
(*Love me for ever !*)
All March begun with,
April's endeavour ;
May-wreaths that bound me
June needs must sever !
Now snows fall round me,
Quenching June's fever—
(*Love me for ever !*)

A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON.

A TRAGEDY.

PERSONS.

MILDRED TRESHAM.

GUENDOLEN TRESHAM.

THOROLD, Lord Tresham

AUSTIN TRESHAM.

HENRY, Earl Mertoun.

GERARD.

Other Retainers of Lord Tresham.

TIME, 17—.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The interior of a Lodge in LORD TRESHAM'S Park. Many Retainers crowded at the window, supposed to command a view of the entrance to his Mansion. GERARD, the Warrener, sitting alone, his back to a table on which are flagons, &c.*

1st Ret. Ay—do—push, friends, and then
you'll push down me.

—What for? Does any hear a runner's
foot.

Or a steed's trample, or a coach-wheel's
cry

Is the Earl come or his least poursuivant?

But there's no breeding in a man of you
Save Gerard yonder : here's a half-place yet,
Old Gerard !

Ger. Save your courtesies, my friend.
Here is my place.

2nd Ret. Now, Gerard, out with it!
What makes you sullen, this of all the days
I' the year? To-day that, young, rich,
bountiful,
Handsome Earl Mertoun, whom alone they
match

With our Lord Tresham thro' the country-
side,

Is coming here in utmost bravery
To ask our Master's Sister's hand?

Ger. What then?

2nd Ret. What then? Why, you she
speaks to, if she meets.

Your worship, smiles on as you hold apart
The boughs to let her thro' her forest walks,
You, always favourite for your no-deserts,
You've heard, these three days, how Earl
Mertoun sues

To lay his heart, and house, and broad
lands too,

At Lady Mildred's feet — and while we
squeeze

Ourselves into a mousehole lest we miss

One congee of the least page in his train,
You sit o' one side—"there's the Earl,"
say I—

"What then," say you !

3rd Ret. I'll wager he has let
Both swans he tamed for Lady Mildred,
swim

Over the falls and gain the river !

Ger. Ralph,
Is not to-morrow my inspecting-day
For you and for your hawks ?

4th Ret. Let Gerard be !
He's coarse-grained, like his carved black
cross-bow stock.

Ha, look now, while we squabble with him,
look !

Well done, now—is not this beginning, now,
To purpose ?

1st Ret. Our retainers look as fine—
That's comfort ! Lord, how Richard holds
himself

With his white staff ! Will not a knave
behind

Prick him upright ?

4th Ret. He's only bowing, fool !
The Earl's man bent us lower by this much.

1st Ret. That's comfort. Here's a very
cavalcade !

3rd Ret. I don't see wherefore Richard,
and his troop
Of silk and silver varlets there, should find

Their perfumed selves so indispensable
On high days, holy-days! Would it so
disgrace

Our Family, if I, for instance, stood—
In my right hand a cast of Swedish hawks,
A leash of greyhounds in my left?—

Ger. —With Hugh

The logman for supporter—in his right
The bill-hook—in his left the brushwood-
shears!

3rd Ret. Out on you, crab! What next,
what next? The Earl!

1st Ret. Oh, Walter, groom, our horses,
do they match

The Earl's? Alas, that first pair of the
six—

They paw the ground—Ah, Walter! and
that brute

Just on his haunches by the wheel!

6th Ret. Ay—Ay!

You, Philip, are a special hand, I hear,
At soups and sauces—what's a horse to
you?

D'ye mark that beast they've slid into the
midst

So cunningly?—then, Philip, mark this
further;

No leg has he to stand on!

1st Ret. No? That's comfort.

2nd Ret. Peace, Cook! The Earl de-
scends.—Well, Gerard, see

The Earl at least ! Come, there's a proper
man,

I hope ! Why, Ralph, no falcon, Pole or
Swede,

Has got a starrier eye—

3rd Ret.

His eyes are blue—

But leave my hawks alone !

4th Ret.

So young, and yet

So tall and shapely !

5th Ret.

Here's Lord Tresham's self !

There now—there's what a nobleman should
be !

He's older, graver, loftier, he's more like
A House's Head !

2nd Ret.

But you'd not have a boy

—And what's the Earl beside?—possess too
soon

That stateliness ?

1st Ret. Our Master takes his hand—

Richard and his white staff are on the
move—

Back fall our people—(tsh !—there's Timothy
Sure to get tangled in his ribbon-ties—

And Peter's cursed rosette's a-coming off !)

—At last I see our Lord's back and his
friend's—

And the whole beautiful bright company

Close round them—in they go !

*[Jumping down from the window-bench,
and making for the table and its jugs,
&c.]* Good health, long life,

Great joy to our Lord Tresham and his House!

6th Ret. My father drove his father first to court,

After his marriage-day—ay, did he!

2nd Ret. God bless Lord Tresham, Lady Mildred, and the Earl! Here, Gerard, reach your beaker!

Ger. Drink, my boys: Don't mind me—all's not right about me—drink!

2nd Ret. [Aside.] He's vexed, now, that he let the show escape!

[*To GER.*] Remember that the Earl returns this way—

Ger. That way?

2nd Ret. Just so.

Ger. Then my way's here. [*Goes.*

2nd Ret. Old Gerard

Will die soon—mind, I said it! He was used

To care about the pitifullest thing
That touched the House's honour, not an eye
But his could see wherein—and on a cause
Of scarce a quarter this importance, Gerard
Fairly had fretted flesh and bone away
In cares that this was right, nor that was wrong,

Such a point decorous, and such by rule—
(He knew such niceties, no herald more)
And now—you see his humour: die he will!

2nd Ret. God help him! Who's for the
 great servants' hall
 To hear what's going on inside! They'd
 follow
 Lord Tresham into the saloon.

3rd Ret. I!—

4th Ret. I!—

Leave Frank alone for catching, at the door,
 Some hint of how the parley goes inside!
 Prosperity to the great House once more—
 Here's the last drop!

1st Ret. Have at you. Boys,
 hurrah!

SCENE II.—*A Saloon in the Mansion.*

Enter LORD TRESHAM, LORD MERTOUN;
 AUSTIN, *and* GUENDOLEN.

Tresh. I welcome you, Lord Mertoun, yet
 once more
 To this ancestral roof of mine. Your name
 —Noble among the noblest in itself,
 Yet taking in your person, fame avers,
 New price and lustre,—(as that gem you
 wear,
 Transmitted from a hundred knightly breasts,
 Fresh chased and set and fixed by its last
 lord,
 Seems to re-kindle at the core)—your name
 Would win you welcome!—

Mer.

Thanks!

Tresh.

—But add to that,

The worthiness and grace and dignity
Of your proposal for uniting both
Our Houses even closer than respect
Unites them now—add these, and you must
grant
One favour more, nor that the least,—to
think
The welcome I should give;—’tis given!
My lord,
My only brother, Austin—he’s the King’s.
Our cousin, Lady Guendolen—betrothed
To Austin: all are yours.

Mer.

I thank you—less

For the expressed commendings which your
seal,
And only that, authenticates—forbids
My putting from me . . . to my heart I
take
Your praise . . . but praise less claims my
gratitude,
Than the indulgent insight it implies
Of what must needs be uppermost with one
Who comes, like me, with the bare leave
to ask,
In weighed and measured unimpassioned
words,
A gift, which, if as calmly ’tis denied,
He must withdraw, content upon his cheek,
Despair within his soul :—that I dare ask

Firmly, near boldly, near with confidence
That gift, I have to thank you.—Yes, Lord
Tresham,

I love your sister—as you'd have one love
That lady . . . oh more, more I love her!

Wealth,

Rank, all the world thinks *me*, they're yours,
you know,

To hold or part with, at your choice—but
grant

My true self, *me* without a rood of land,

A piece of gold, a name of yesterday,

Grant me that lady, and you . . . Death
or life?

Guen. [*Apart to Aus.*] Why, this is
loving, Austin!

Aus. He's so young!

Guen. Young? Old enough, I think, to
half surmise

He never had obtained an entrance here,

Were all this fear and trembling needed.

Aus. Hush!

He reddens.

Guen. Mark him, Austin; that's
true love!

Ours must begin again.

Tresh. We'll sit, my lord.

Ever with best desert goes diffidence.

I may speak plainly nor be misconceived.

That I am wholly satisfied with you

On this occasion, when a falcon's eye

Were dull compared with mine to search out
 faults,
Is somewhat. Mildred's hand is hers to give
Or to refuse.

Mer. But you, you grant my suit?
I have your word if hers?

Tresh. My best of words
If hers encourage you. I trust it will.
Have you seen Lady Mildred, by the way?

Mer. I . . . I . . . our two demesnes,
remember, touch—

I have been used to wander carelessly
After my stricken game—the heron roused
Deep in my woods, has trailed its broken
 wing
Thro' thickets and glades a mile in yours,—
 or else

Some eyass ill-reclaimed has taken flight
And lured me after her from tree to tree,
I marked not whither . . . I have come
 upon

The Lady's wondrous beauty unaware,
And—and then . . . I have seen her.

Guen. [*Aside to AUS.*] Note that mode
Of faltering out that when a lady passed
He, having eyes, did see her! You had
 said—

“On such a day I scanned her, head to foot;
“Observed a red, where red should not have
 been,

“Outside her elbow; but was pleased enough

"Upon the whole." Let such irreverent talk
Be lessoned for the future !

Tresh.

What's to say

May be said briefly. She has never known
A mother's care ; I stand for father too.
Her beauty is not strange to you, it seems—
You cannot know the good and tender heart,
Its girl's trust, and its woman's constancy,
How pure yet passionate, how calm yet kind,
How grave yet joyous, how reserved yet free
As light where friends are—how embued
with lore

The world most prizes, yet the simplest, yet
The . . . one might know I talked of
Mildred—thus

We brothers talk !

Mer.

I thank you.

Tresh.

In a word,

Control's not for this lady ; but her wish
To please me outstrips in its subtlety
My power of being pleased—herself creates
The want she means to satisfy. My heart
Prefers your suit to her as 'twere its own.
Can I say more ?

Mer.

No more—thanks, thanks—
no more !

Tresh. This matter then discussed . . .

Mer. . . . We'll waste no breath

On aught less precious—I'm beneath the roof
That holds her : while I thought of that, my
speech

To you would wander—as it must not do,
 Since as you favour me I stand or fall.
 I pray you suffer that I take my leave !

Tresh. With less regret 'tis suffered, that
 again

We meet, I hope, so shortly.

Mer. We ? again ?—

Ah yes, forgive me—when shall . . . you
 will crown

Your goodness by forthwith apprising me
 When . . . if . . . the Lady will appoint
 a day

For me to wait on you—and he!

Tresh. So soon

As I am made acquainted with her thoughts
 On your proposal—howsoe'er they lean—
 A messenger shall bring you the result.

Mer. You cannot bind me more to you,
 my lord.

Farewell till we renew . . . I trust, renew
 A converse ne'er to disunite again.

Tresh. So may it prove !

Mer. You, Lady, you, Sir, take
 My humble salutation

Guen. and Aus. Thanks !

Tresh. Within there !

[*Servants enter.* TRESHAM conducts
 MERTOUN to the door. Meantime AUSTIN
 remarks,

Well,

Here I have an advantage of the Earl,

Confess now! I'd not think that all was
safe

Because my lady's brother stood my friend.

Why, he makes sure of her—"do you say,
yes—

"She'll not say, no"—what comes it to
beside?

I should have prayed the brother, "speak
this speech,

"For Heaven's sake urge this on her—
put in this—

"Forget not, as you'd save me, t'other
thing,—

"Then set down what she says, and how she
looks,

"And if she smiles," and (in an under
breath)

"Only let her accept me, and do you

"And all the world refuse me, if you dare!"

Guen. That way you'd take, friend
Austin? What a shame

I was your cousin tamely from the first

Your bride, and all this fervour's run to
waste!

Do you know you speak sensibly to-day?

The Earl's a fool.

Aus. Here's Thorold. Tell him so!

Tresh. [Returning.] Now, voices, voices!

'St! the lady's first!

How seems he?—seems he not . . . come,
faith give fraud

The mercy-stroke whenever they engage !
Down with fraud—up with faith ! How
seems the Earl ?

A name ! a blazon ! if you knew their worth,
As you will never ! come—the Earl ?

Guen. He's young.

Tresh. What's she ? an infant save in heart
and brain.

Young ! Mildred is fourteen, remark ! And
you . . .

Austin, how old is she ?

Guen. There's tact for you !
I meant that being young was good excuse
If one should tax him . . .

Tresh. Well ?

Guen. —With lacking wit.

Tresh. He lacked wit ? Where might he
lack wit, so please you ?

Guen. In standing straighter than the
steward's rod

And making you the tiresomest harangues,
Instead of slipping over to my side
And softly whispering in my ear, " Sweet
lady,

" Your cousin there will do me detriment

" He little dreams of—he's absorbed, I see,

" In my old name and fame—be sure he'll
leave

" My Mildred, when his best account of me

" Is ended, in full confidence I wear

" My grandsire's periwig down either cheek.

"I'm lost unless your gentleness vouch-safes" . . .

Tresh. . . . "To give a best of best accounts, yourself,

"Of me and my demerits." You are right !
He should have said what now I say for him.
You golden creature, will you help us all ?
Here's Austin means to vouch for much, but
you

—You are . . . what Austin only knows !
Come up,

All three of us—she's in the Library
No doubt, for the day's wearing fast.
Precede !

Guen. Austin, how we must—!

Tresh. Must what? Must speak truth,
Malignant tongue ! Detect one fault in him !
I challenge you !

Guen. Witchcraft's a fault in him,
For you're bewitched.

Tresh. What's urgent we obtain
Is, that she soon receive him—say, to-morrow—

Next day at farthest.

Guen. Ne'er instruct me !

Tresh. Come !

—He's out of your good graces since
forsooth,
He stood not as he'd carry us by storm
With his perfections ! You're for the
composed,

Manly, assured, becoming confidence!

—Get her to say, “to-morrow,” and

I’ll give you . . .

I’ll give you black Urganda, to be spoiled

With petting and snail-paces. Will you?

Come!

SCENE III.—MILDRED’S *Chamber. A painted window overlooks the park.* MILDRED and GUENDOLEN.

Guen. Now, Mildred, spare those pains.

I have not left

Our talkers in the Library, and climbed

The wearisome ascent to this your bower

In company with you,—I have not dared . . .

Nay, worked such prodigies as sparing you

Lord Mertoun’s pedigree before the flood,

Which Thorold seemed in very act to tell—

—Or bringing Austin to pluck up that most

Firm-rooted heresy—your suitor’s eyes,

He would maintain, were gray instead of blue—

I think I brought him to contrition!—Well,

I have not done such things, (all to deserve

A minute’s quiet cousin’s-talk with you,)

To be dismissed so coolly!

Mil.

Guendolen,

What have I done . . . what could suggest . . .

Guen. There, there !

Do I not comprehend you'd be alone
To throw those testimonies in a heap,
Thorold's enlargings, Austin's brevities,
With that poor, silly, heartless Guendolen's
Ill-timed, misplaced, attempted smartnesses—
And sift their sense out? now, I come to
spare you

Nearly a whole night's labour. Ask and have!

Demand, be answered! Lack I ears and eyes?

Am I perplexed which side of the rock-table
The Conqueror dined on when he landed
first,

Lord Mertoun's ancestor was bidden take—
The bow-hand or the arrow-hand's great
 need?

Mildred, the Earl has soft blue eyes !

Mil. My brother—

Did he . . . you said that he received him
well?

Guen. If I said only "well" I said not much—

Oh, stay—which brother?

Mil. Thorold ! who—who else ?

Guen. Thorold (a secret) is too proud by half,—

Nay, hear me out—with us he's even gentler
Than we are with our birds. Of this great
House

The least retainer that e'er caught his glance
Would die for him, real dying—no mere talk :
And in the world, the court, if men would cite
The perfect spirit of honour, Thorold's name
Rises of its clear nature to their lips :
But he should take men's homage, trust in it,
And care no more about what drew it down.
He has desert, and that, acknowledgment ;
Is he content ?

Mil. You wrong him, Guendolen.

Guen. He's proud, confess ; so proud with
brooding o'er
The light of his interminable line,
An ancestry with men all paladins,
And women all . . .

Mil. Dear Guendolen, 'tis late !
When yonder purple pane the climbing moon
Pierces, I know 'tis midnight.

Guen. Well, that Thorold
Should rise up from such musings and receive
One come audaciously to graft himself
Into this peerless stock, yet find no flaw,
No slightest spot in such an one. . . .

Mil. Who finds
A spot in Mertoun ?

Guen. Not your brother ; there-
fore,
Not the whole world.

Mil. I'm weary, Guendolen.—
Bear with me !

Guen. I am foolish.

Mil. Oh, no, kind—
But I would rest.

Guen. Good night and rest to you.
I said how gracefully his mantle lay
Beneath the rings of his light hair?

Mil. Brown hair!

Guen. Brown? why it is brown—how could
you know that?

Mil. How? did not you—Oh, Austin
'twas, declared
His hair was light, not brown—my head!—
and, look,

The moon-beam purpling the dark chamber!
Sweet,
Good night!

Guen. Forgive me—sleep the soundlier
for me!

[*Going, she turns suddenly.*

Mildred!

Perdition! all's discovered.—Thorold finds
—That the Earl's greatest of all grand-
mothers

Was grander daughter still—to that fair
dame

Whose garter slipped down at the famous
dance!

[*Goes.*

Mil. Is she—can she be really gone at
last?

My heart—I shall not reach the window!
Needs

Must I have sinned much, so to suffer!

*[She lifts the small lamp which is suspended
before the Virgin's image in the window,
and places it by the purple pane. There!*

[She returns to the seat in front.

Mildred and Mertoun ! Mildred, with consent
Of all the world and Thorold,—Mertoun's
bride !

Too late ! 'Tis sweet to think of, sweeter
still

To hope for, that this blessed end soothes up
The curse of the beginning ; but I know
It comes too late—'twill sweetest be of all
To dream my soul away and die upon !

[A noise without.

The voice ! Oh ! why, why glided sin the
snake

Into the Paradise Heaven meant us both ?

[The window opens softly.—A low voice sings.

There's a woman like a dew-drop, she's so purer
than the purest ;

And her noble heart's the noblest, yes, and her
sure faith's the surest :

And her eyes are dark and humid, like the depth on
depth of lustre

Hid i' the harebell, while her tresses, sunnier
than the wild-grape cluster,

Gush in golden-tinted plenty down her neck's rose-
misted marble :

Then her voice's music . . . call it the well's bubbling,
the bird's warble !

*[A figure wrapped in a mantle appears at the
window*

And this woman says, " My days were sunless and
 my nights were moonless,
 " Parched the pleasant April herbage, and the lark's
 heart's outbreak tuneless,
 " If you loved me not ! " And I who—(ah, for words
 of flame !) adore her !
 Who am mad to lay my spirit prostrate palpably
 before her—

*[He enters—approaches her seat, and bends
 over her.]*

I may enter at her portal soon, as now her lattice
 takes me,
 And by noontide as by midnight make her mine, as
 hers she makes me !

*[The Earl throws off his slouched hat and long
 cloak.]*

My very heart sings, so I sing, beloved !

Mil. Sit, Henry—do not take my hand.

Mer. 'Tis mine !

The meeting that appalled us both so much
 Is ended.

Mil. What begins now ?

Mer. Happiness

Such as the world contains not.

Mil. That is it.

Our happiness would, as you say, exceed
 The whole world's best of blisses : we—do
 we

Deserve that ? Utter to your soul, what
 mine

Long since, beloved, has grown used to hear,
 Like a death-knell, so much regarded once,

And so familiar now ; this will not be !

Mer. Oh, Mildred, have I met your
brother's face,
Compelled myself—if not to speak untruth,
Yet to disguise, to shun, to put aside
The truth, as what had e'er prevailed on me
Save you, to venture? Have I gained at
last

Your brother, the one scarer of your dreams,
And waking thoughts' sole apprehension
too?

Does a new life, like a young sunrise, break
On the strange unrest of our night, confused
With rain and stormy flaw—and will you see
No dripping blossoms, no fire-tinted drops
On each live spray, no vapour steaming up,
And no expressless glory in the east?
When I am by you, to be ever by you,
When I have won you and may worship you,
Oh, Mildred, can you say "this will not be?"

Mil. Sin has surprised us ; so will punishment.

Mer. No—me alone, who sinned alone !

Mil. The night
You likened our past life to—was it storm
Throughout to you then, Henry?

Mer. Of your life
I spoke—what am I, what my life, to waste
A thought about when you are by me?—
you

It was, I said my folly called the storm

And pulled the night upon.—'Twas day
with me—

Perpetual dawn with me.

Mil. Come what, come will,
You have been happy—take my hand!

Mer. [*After a pause.*] How good
Your brother is! I figured him a cold—
Shall I say, haughty man?

Mil. They told me all.
I know all.

Mer. It will soon be over.

Mil. Over?
Oh, what is over? what must I live thro'
And say, "'tis over?" Is our meeting over?
Have I received in presence of them all
The partner of my guilty love,—with brow
Trying to seem a maiden's brow—with lips
Which make believe that when they strive
to form

Replies to you and tremble as they strive,
It is the nearest ever they approached
A stranger's . . . Henry, yours that stranger's
. . . lip—

With cheek that looks a virgin's, and that
is . . .

Ah, God! some prodigy of thine will stop
This planned piece of deliberate wickedness
In its birth even—some fierce leprous spot
Will mar the brows dissimulating—I
Shall murmur no smooth speeches got by
heart,

But, frenzied, pour forth all our woeful
story,
The love, the shame, and the despair—with
them
Round me aghast as men round some cursed
fount
That should spirt water, and spouts blood.
I'll not
. . . Henry, you do not wish that I should
draw
This vengeance down? I'll not affect a grace
That's gone from me—gone once, and gone
for ever!

Mer. Mildred, my honour is your own.
I'll share

Disgrace I cannot suffer by myself.
A word informs your brother I retract
This morning's offer; time will yet bring
forth

Some better way of saving both of us.

Mil. I'll meet their faces, Mertoun!

Mer. When? to-morrow

Get done with it!

Mil. Oh, Henry, not to-morrow!

Next day! I never shall prepare my words
And looks and gestures sooner!—How you
must

Despise me!

Mer. Mildred, break it if you choose,
A heart the love of you uplifted—still
Uplifts, thro' this protracted agony,

To Heaven ! but, Mildred, answer me,—first
pace

The chamber with me—once again—now, say
Calmly the part, the . . . what it is of me
You see contempt (for you did say contempt)
—Contempt for you in ! I would pluck it off
And cast it from me !—but no—no, you'll
not

Repeat that?—will you, Mildred, repeat
that?

Mil. Dear Henry—

Mer. I was scarce a boy—
e'en now

What am I more ? And you were infantine
When first I met you—why, your hair fell
loose

On either side !—my fool's cheek reddens
now

Only in the recalling how it burned
That morn to see the shape of many a dream
—You know we boys are prodigal of charms
To her we dream of—I had heard of one,
Had dreamed of her, and I was close to
her,

Might speak to her, might live and die her
own,

Who knew?—I spoke—Oh, Mildred, feel
you not

That now, while I remember every glance
Of yours, each word of yours, with power
to test

And weigh them in the diamond scales of
Pride,

Resolved the treasure of a first and last
Heart's love shall have been bartered at its
worth,

—That now I think upon your purity
And utter ignorance of guilt—your own
Or other's guilt—the girlish undisguised
Delight at a strange novel prize—(I talk
A silly language, but interpret, you !)
If I, with fancy at its full, and reason
Scarce in its germ, enjoined you secrecy,
If you had pity on my passion, pity
On my protested sickness of the soul
To sit beside you, hear you breathe, and
watch

Your eyelids and the eyes beneath—if you
Accorded gifts and knew not they were
gifts—

If I grew mad at last with enterprise
And must behold my beauty in her bower
Or perish—(I was ignorant of even
My own desires—what then were you ?) if
sorrow—

Sin—if the end came—must I now renounce
My reason, blind myself to light, say truth
Is false and lie to God and my own soul ?
Contempt were all of this !

Mil.

Do you believe . . .

Or, Henry, I'll not wrong you—you believe
That I was ignorant. I scarce grieve o'er

The past ! We'll love on—you will love me still !

Mer. Oh, to love less what one has injured ! Dove,
Whose pinion I have rashly hurt, my breast—

Shall my heart's warmth not nurse thee into strength ?

Flower I have crushed, shall I not care for thee ?

Bloom o'er my crest my fight-mark and device !

Mildred, I love you and you love me !

Mil. Go !
Be that your last word. I shall sleep to-night.

Mer. This is not our last meeting ?

Mil. One night more.

Mer. And then—think, then !

Mil. Then, no sweet courtship-days,
No dawning consciousness of love for us,
No strange and palpitating births of sense
From words and looks, no innocent fears and hopes,

Reserves and confidences: morning's over !

Mer. How else should love's perfected noontide follow ?

All the dawn promised shall the day perform.

Mil. So may it be ! but——

You are cautious, love ?
Are sure that unobserved you scaled the walls ?

Mer. Oh, trust me ! Then our final meeting's fixed ?

To-morrow night ?

Mil. Farewell ! Stay, Henry
 . . . wherefore ?

His foot is on the yew-tree bough—the turf
 Receives him—now the moonlight as he runs
 Embraces him—but he must go—is gone—
 Ah, once again he turns—thanks, thanks,
 my love !

He's gone—Oh, I'll believe him every word !
 I was so young—I loved him so—I had
 No mother—God forgot me—and I fell.
 There may be pardon yet—all's doubt
 beyond.

Surely the bitterness of death is past !

ACT II.

SCENE.—*The Library.*

Enter LORD TRESHAM hastily.

This way—In, Gerard, quick !

[*As GERARD enters TRESHAM secures the door.*

Now speak ! or, wait—
 I'll bid you speak directly. [*Seats himself.*

Now repeat
 Firmly and circumstantially the tale



Page 226

"What book
Is it I wanted, Thorold?"

You've just now told me ; it eludes me ;
either

I did not listen, or the half is gone
Away from me—How long have you lived
here ?

Here in my house, your father kept our
woods

Before you ?

Ger. —As his father did, my lord.
I have been eating sixty years, almost,
Your bread.

Tresh. Yes, yes—You ever were of all
The servants in my father's house, I know,
The trusted one. You'll speak the truth.

Ger. I'll speak
God's truth : night after night . . .

Tresh. Since when ?

Ger. At least
A month—each midnight has some man
access

To Lady Mildred's chamber.

Tresh. Tush, "access"—
No wide words like "access" to me !

Ger. He runs
Along the woodside, crosses to the south,
Takes the left tree that ends the avenue . . .

Tresh. The last great yew-tree ?

Ger. You might stand upon
The main boughs like a platform . . . Then
he . . .

Tresh. Quick !

Ger. . . . Climbs up, and, where they
lessen at the top,
—I cannot see distinctly, but he throws,
I think—for this I do not vouch—a line
That reaches to the Lady's casement—

Tresh. —Which
He enters not! Gerard—some wretched fool
Dares pry into my sister's privacy!
When such are young, it seems a precious
thing
To have approached,—to merely have ap-
proached,
Got sight of, the abode of her they set
Their frantic thoughts upon! He does not
enter?
Gerard?

Ger. There is a lamp that's full in the
midst,
Under a red square in the painted glass
Of Lady Mildred's . . .

Tresh. Leave that name out! Well?
That lamp?

Ger. Is moved at midnight higher up
To one pane—a small dark-blue pane—he
waits
For that among the boughs; at sight of
that,
I see him, plain as I see you, my lord,
Open the Lady's casement, enter there . . .

Tresh. —And stay?

Ger. An hour, two hours.

Tresh. And this you saw
Once?—twice?—quick!

Ger. Twenty times.

Tresh. And what brings you
Under the yew-trees?

Ger. The first night I left
My range so far, to track the stranger
stag

That broke the pale, I saw the man.

Tresh. Yet sent
No cross-bow shaft thro' the marauder?

Ger. But
He came, my lord, the first time he was
seen,

In a great moonlight, light as any day,

From Lady Mildred's chamber.

Tresh. [*After a pause.*] You have no
cause—

—Who could have cause to do my sister
wrong?

Ger. Oh, my lord, only once—let me this
once

Speak what is on my mind! Since first I
noted

All this, I've groaned as if a fiery net

Plucked me this way and that—fire, if I
turned

To her, fire if I turned to you, and fire,

If down I flung myself and strove to die.

The lady could not have been seven years old
When I was trusted to conduct her safe

Thro' the deer-herd to stroke the snow-white
fawn

I brought to eat brezd from her tiny hand
Within a month. She ever had a smile
To greet me with—she . . . if it could undo
What's done to lop each limb from off this
trunk . . .

All that is foolish talk, not fit for you—
I mean, I could not speak and bring her
hurt

For Heaven's compelling: but when I was
fixed

To hold my peace, each morsel of your food
Eaten beneath your roof, my birthplace too,
Choked me. I wish I had grown mad in
doubts

What it behoved me do. This morn it
seemed

Either I must confess to you, or die:
Now it is done, I seem the vilest worm
That crawls, to have betrayed my Lady!

Tresh.

No—

No—Gerard!

Ger. Let me go!

Tresh.

A man, you say—

What man? Young? Not a vulgar hind?
What dress?

Ger. A slouched hat and a large dark
foreign cloak

Wraps his whole form: even his face is
hid;

But I should judge him young ; no hind, be
sure !

Tresh. Why ?

Ger. He is ever armed : his sword
projects

Beneath the cloak.

Tresh. Gerard,—I will not say

No word, no breath of this !

Ger. Thanks, thanks, my lord !
[*Goes.*

[*TRESHAM paces the room. After a pause,*
Oh, thought's absurd !—as with some
monstrous fact

That, when ill thoughts beset us, seems to
give

Merciful God that made the sun and stars,
The waters and the green delights of earth,
The lie ! I apprehend the monstrous fact—
Yet know the Maker of all worlds is good,
And yield my reason up, inadequate
To reconcile what yet I do behold—
Blasting my sense ! There's cheerful day
outside—

This is my library—and this the chair
My father used to sit in carelessly,
After his soldier-fashion, while I stood
Between his knees to question him—and
here,

Gerard, our gray retainer,—as he says,
Fed with our food from sire to son an
age,—

Has told a story—I am to believe !
That Mildred . . . oh, no, no ! both tales
are true,

Her pure cheek's story and the forester's !
Would she, or could she, err—much less,
confound

All guilts of treachery, of craft, of . . .
Heaven

Keep me within its hand !—I will sit here
Until thought settles and I see my course.

Avert, oh God, only this woe from me !

*[As he sinks his head between his arms on
the table, GUENDOLEN'S voice is heard at
the door.]*

Lord Tresham ! *[She knocks.]* Is Lord
Tresham there ?

*[TRESHAM, hastily turning, pulls down the
first book above him and opens it.]*

Tresh. Come in ! *[She enters.]*

Ah, Guendolen—good morning.

Guen. Nothing more ?

Tresh. What should I say more ?

Guen. Pleasant question ! more ?

This more ! Did I besiege poor Mildred's
brain

Last night till close on morning with "the
Earl"—

"The Earl"—whose worth did I asseverate
Till I am very fain to hope that . . . Thorold,
What is all this ? You are not well !

Tresh. Who, I ?

You laugh at me.

Guen. Has what I'm fain to hope
Arrived, then? Does that huge tome show
some blot

In the Earl's 'scutcheon come no longer back
Than Arthur's time?

Tresh. When left you Mildred's
chamber?

Guen. Oh late enough, I told you! The
main thing

To ask is, how I left her chamber,—sure,
Content yourself, she'll grant this paragon
Of Earls no such ungracious . . .

Tresh. Send her here!

Guen. Thorold?

Tresh. I mean—acquaint her, Guen-
dolen—

—But mildly!

Guen. Mildly?

Tresh. Ah, you guess'd aright!
I am not well—there is no hiding it.
But tell her I would see her at her leisure—
That is, at once! here in the Library!
The passage in that old Italian book
We hunted for so long is found, say,—
found—

And if I let it slip again . . . you see,
That she must come—and instantly!

Guen. I'll die
Piecemeal, record that, if there have not
gloomed

Some blot i' the 'scutcheon !

Tresh.

Go ! or, Guendolen,

Be you at call,—with Austin, if you choose,—
In the adjoining gallery—There, go !

[GUENDOLEN goes.]

Another lesson to me ! you might bid
A child disguise his heart's sore, and conduct
Some sly investigation point by point
With a smooth brow, as well as bid me
catch

The inquisitorial cleverness some praise !

If you had told me yesterday, ‘ ‘ There's one
“ You needs must circumvent and practise
with,

“ Entrap by policies, if you would worm

“ The truth out—and that one is—Mildred ! ”
There—

There—reasoning is thrown away on it !

Prove she's unchaste . . . why you may
after prove

That she's a poisoner, traitress, what you
will !

Where I can comprehend nought, nought's
to say,

Or do, or think ! Force on me but the first
Abomination,—then outpour all plagues,
And I shall ne'er make count of them !

Enter MILDRED.

Mil.

What book

Is it I wanted, Thorold ? Guendolen

Thought you were pale—you are not pale !
That book ?

That's Latin surely !

Tresh. Mildred—here's a line—
(Don't lean on me—I'll English it for you)

“Love conquers all things.” What love
conquers them ?

What love should you esteem—best love ?

Mil. True love.

Tresh. I mean, and should have said,
whose love is best

Of all that love or that profess to love ?

Mil. The list's so long—there's father's,
mother's, husband's . . .

Tresh. Mildred, I do believe a brother's
love

For a sole sister must exceed them all !

For see now, only see ! there's no alloy

Of earth that creeps into the perfect'st gold

Of other loves—no gratitude to claim ;

You never gave her life—not even aught

That keeps life—never tended her, instructed,

Enriched her—so your love can claim no
right

O'er hers save pure love's claim—that's what
I call

Freedom from earthliness. You'll never hope
To be such friends, for instance, she and you,
As when you hunted cowslips in the woods,
Or played together in the meadow hay.

Oh yes—with age, respect comes, and your
worth

Is felt, there's growing sympathy of tastes,
There's ripened friendship, there's confirmed
esteem,

—Much head these make against the new-
comer !

The startling apparition—the strange youth—
Whom one half-hour's conversing with, or,
say,

Mere gazing at, shall change (beyond all
change

This Ovid ever sang about !) your soul
. . . *Her* soul, that is,—the sister's soul !
With her

'Twas winter yesterday ; now, all is warmth,
The green leaf's springing and the turtle's
voice,

“ Arise and come away ! ” Come whither ?
—far

Enough from the esteem, respect, and all
The brother's somewhat insignificant
Array of rights ! all which he knows before—
Has calculated on so long ago !

I think such love, (apart from yours and
mine,)

Contented with its little term of life,
Intending to retire betimes, aware
How soon the background must be place
for it,

I think, am sure, a brother's love exceeds
All the world's loves in its unworldliness.

Mil. What is this for ?

Tresh. This, Mildred, is it for !
Oh, no, I cannot go to it so soon !
That's one of many points my haste left out—
Each day, each hour throws forth its silk-
slight film
Between the being tied to you by birth,
And you, until those slender threads compose
A web that shrouds her daily life of hopes
And fears and fancies, all her life, from
yours—
So close you live and yet so far apart !
And must I rend this web, tear up, break
down
The sweet and palpitating mystery
That makes her sacred ? You—for you I
mean,
Shall I speak—Shall I not speak ?

Mil.

Speak !

Tresh.

I will.

Is there a story men could—any man
Could tell of you, you would conceal from me?
I'll never think there's falsehood on that lip !
Say, "There is no such story men could
tell,"
And I'll believe you, tho' I disbelieve
The world . . . the world of better men
than I,
And women such as I suppose you—Speak !
[*After a pause.*] Not speak ? Explain then !
clear it up, then ! Move
Some of the miserable weight away

That presses lower than the grave! Not
speak?

Some of the dead weight, Mildred! Ah, if I
Could bring myself to plainly make their
charge

Against you! Must I, Mildred? Silent
still?

[*After a pause.*] Is there a gallant that has
night by night

Admittance to your chamber?

[*After a pause.*] Then, his name!

Till now, I only had a thought for you—

But now,—his name!

Mil. Thorold, do you devise
Fit expiation for my guilt, if fit
There be! 'tis nought to say that I'll endure
And bless you,—that my spirit yearns to
purge

Her stains off in the fierce renewing fire—

But do not plunge me into other guilt!

Oh, guilt enough! I cannot tell his name.

Tresh. Then judge yourself! How should
I act? Pronounce!

Mil. Oh, Thorold, you must never tempt
me thus!

To die here in this chamber by that sword
Would seem like punishment—so should I
glide

Like an arch-cheat, into extremest bliss!

'Twere easily arranged for me! but you—
What would become of you?

Tresh. And what will now
 Become of me? I'll hide your shame and
 mine
 From every eye; the dead must heave their
 hearts
 Under the marble of our chapel-floor;
 They cannot rise and blast you! You may
 wed
 Your paramour above our mother's tomb;
 Our mother cannot move from 'neath your
 foot.
 We two will somehow wear this one day
 out:
 But with to-morrow hastens here—the Earl!
 The youth without suspicion that faces come
 From Heaven, and hearts from . . . whence
 proceed such hearts?
 I have despatched last night at your com-
 mand
 A missive bidding him present himself
 To-morrow here—thus much is said—the
 rest
 Is understood as if 'twere written down—
 “His suit finds favour in your eyes,”—now
 dictate
 This morning's letter that shall countermand
 Last night's—do dictate that!

Mil.

But, Thorold—if

I will receive him as I said?

*Tresh.**The Earl?**Mil.* I will receive him!

Tresh. [*Starting up.*] Ho there! Guendolen!

GUENDOLEN and AUSTIN enter.

And, Austin, you are welcome too! Look there!

The woman there!

Aus. and Guen. How? Mildred?

Tresh. Mildred once!

Now the receiver night by night, when sleep
Blesses the inmates of her father's house,
—I say, the soft sly wanton that receives
Her guilt's accomplice 'neath this roof which
holds

You, Guendolen, you, Austin, and has held
A thousand Treshams—never one like her!
No lighter of the signal lamp her quick
Foul breath near quenches in hot eagerness
To mix with breath as foul! no loosener
Of the lattice, practised in the stealthy
tread,

The low voice and the noiseless come-and-go!

Not one composer of the Bacchant's mien
Into—what you thought Mildred's, in a
word!

Know her!

Guen. Oh, Mildred, look to me, at least!
Thorold—she's dead, I'd say, but that she
stands

Rigid as stone and whiter!

Tresh. You have heard . . .

Guen. Too much ! you must proceed on further !

Mil. Yes—

Proceed—All's truth ! Go from me !

Tresh. All is truth,
She tells you ! Well, you know, or ought to know,

All this I would forgive in her. I'd con
Each precept the harsh world enjoins, I'd take
Our ancestors' stern verdicts one by one,
I'd bind myself before them to exact
The prescribed vengeance—and one word
of hers,

The sight of her, the bare least memory
Of Mildred, my one sister, my heart's pride
Above all prides, my all in all so long,
Had scattered every trace of my resolve !
What were it silently to waste away
And see her waste away from this day forth,
Two scathed things with leisure to repent,
And grow acquainted with the grave, and die,
Tired out if not at peace, and be forgotten ?
It were not so impossible to bear !
But this—that, fresh from last night's pledge
renewed

Of love with the successful gallant there,
She'll calmly bid me help her to entice,
Inveigle an unconscious trusting youth
Who thinks her all that's chaste, and good,
and pure,

—Invite me to betray him . . . who so fit
As honour's self to cover shame's arch-deed?

—That she'll receive Lord Mertoun—(her
own phrase)—

This, who could bear? Why, you have
heard of thieves,

Stabbers, the earth's disgrace—who yet have
laughed,

“Talk not of tortures to me—I'll betray

“No comrade I've pledged faith to!”—you
have heard

“Of wretched women—all but, Mildreds—
tied

By wild illicit ties to losels vile

You'd tempt them to forsake; and they'll
reply

“Gold, friends, repute, I left for him, I
have

“In him, why should I leave him then for
gold,

“Repute, or friends?”—and you have felt
your heart

Respond to such poor outcasts of the world

As to so many friends; bad as you please,

You've felt they were God's men and women
still,

So not to be disowned by you! but she,

That stands there, calmly gives her lover up

As means to wed the Earl that she may hide

Their intercourse the surelier! and, for this,

I curse her to her face before you all!

Shame hunt her from the earth! Then
Heaven do right

To both! It hears me now—shall judge
her then!

[*As MILDRED faints and falls, TRESHAM
rushes out.*

Aus. Stay, Tresham, we'll accompany
you!

Guen. We?

What, and leave Mildred? We? why,
where's my place

But by her side, and where's, yours but by
mine?

Mildred—one word—only look at me, then!

Aus. No, Guendolen! I echo Thorold's
voice!

She is unworthy to behold . . .

Guen. Us two?

If you spoke on reflection, and if I

Approved your speech—if you (to put the
thing

At lowest) you, the soldier, bound to make
The King's cause yours, and fight for it,
and throw

Regard to others of its right or wrong,
—If with a death-white woman you can help,

Let alone sister, let alone a Mildred,

You left her—or if I, her cousin, friend

This morning, playfellow but yesterday,

Who've said, or thought at least a thousand
times,

"I'd serve you if I could," should now face
round

And say, "Ah, that's to only signify

"I'd serve you while you're fit to serve
yourself—

"So long as fifty eyes await the turn

"Of yours to forestall its yet half-formed
wish,

"I'll proffer my assistance you'll not need—

"When every tongue is praising you, I'll join

"The praisers' chorus—when you're hemmed
about

"With lives between you and' detraction—
lives

"To be laid down if a rude voice, rash eye,

"Rough hand should violate the sacred ring

"Their worship throws about you,—then
indeed,

"Who'll stand up for you stout as I?"
If so

We said and so we did,—not Mildred there

Would be unworthy to behold us both,

But we should be unworthy, both of us,

To be beheld by—by—your meanest dog,

Which, if that sword were broken in your
face

Before a crowd, that badge torn off your
breast,

And you cast out with hootings and contempt,

—Would push his way thro' all the hooters,
gain

Your side, go off with you and all your
shame

To the next ditch you chose to die in!
Austin,

Do you love me? Here's Austin, Mildred,
—here's

Your brother says he does not believe half—
No, nor half that—of all he heard! He says,
Look up and take his hand!

Aus. Look up and take
My hand, dear Mildred!

Mil. I—I was so young!
Beside, I loved him, Thorold—and I had
No mother—God forgot me—so I fell!

Guen. Mildred!

Mil. Require no rurther! Did I
dream
That I could palliate what is done? All's
true.

Now, punish me! A woman takes my hand!
Let go my hand! You do not know, I see—
I thought that Thorold told you.

Guen. What is this?
Where start you to?

Mil. Oh Austin, loosen me!
You heard the whole of it—your eyes were
worse,

In their surprise, than Thorold's! Oh, unless
You stay to execute his sentence, loose
My hand! Has Thorold gone, and are you
here?

Guen. Here, Mildred, we two friends
of yours will wait
Your bidding ; be you silent, sleep or muse !
Only, when you shall want your bidding done,
How can we do it if we are not by ?
Here's Austin waiting patiently your will !
One spirit to command, and one to love
And to believe in it and do its best,
Poor as that is, to help it—why, the world
Has been won many a time, its length and
breadth,
By just such a beginning !

Mil. I believe
If once I threw my arms about your neck
And sunk my head upon your breast, that I
Should weep again !

Guen. Let go her hand now, Austin.
Wait for me.—Pace the gallery and think
On the world's seemings and realities
Until I call you. [AUSTIN goes.

Mil. No—I cannot weep !
No more tears from this brain—no sleep—
no tears !
O Guendolen, I love you !

Guen. Yes : and “love”
Is a short word that says so very much !
It says that you confide in me.

Mil. Confide !

Guen. Your lover's name, then ! I've so
much to learn,
Ere I can work in your behalf !

- Mil.* My friend,
You know I cannot tell his name.
- Guen.* At least
He is your lover? and you love him too?
- Mil.* Ah, do you ask me that?—but I am
fallen
So low!
- Guen.* You love him still, then?
- Mil.* My sole prop
Against the guilt that crushes me! I say,
Each night ere I lie down, "I was so
young—
"I had no mother—and I loved him so!"
And then God seems indulgent, and I dare
Trust Him my soul in sleep.
- Guen.* How could you let us
E'en talk to you about Lord Mertoun then?
- Mil.* There is a cloud around me.
- Guen.* But you said
You would receive his suit in spite of this?
- Mil.* I say there is a cloud . . .
- Guen.* No cloud to me!
Lord Mertoun and your lover are the same!
- Mil.* What maddest fancy . . .
- Guen.* [*Calling aloud.*] Austin!
(Spare your pains—
When I have got a truth, that truth I keep)—
- Mil.* By all you love, sweet Guendolen,
forbear!
- Have I confided in you . . .
- Guen.* Just for this!

Austin!—Oh, not to guess it at the first!
 But I *did* guess it—that is, I divined—
 Felt by an instinct how it was—why else
 Should I pronounce you free from all that
 heap

Of sins which had been irredeemable?
 I felt they were not yours—what other way
 Than this, not yours? The secret's wholly
 mine!

Mil. If you would see me die before his
 face . . .

Guen. I'd hold my peace! And if the
 Earl returns
 To-night?

Mil. Ah, Heaven, he's lost!

Guen. I thought so! Austin!

Enter AUSTIN.

Oh, where have you been hiding?

Aus. Thorold's gone,
 I know not how, across the meadowland.
 I watched him till I lost him in the skirts
 Of the beech-wood.

Guen. Gone? All thwarts us!

Mil. Thorold too?

Guen. I have thought. First lead this
 Mildred to her room.

Go on the other side: and then we'll seek
 Your brother; and I'll tell you, by the way,
 The greatest comfort in the world. You said
 There was a clew to all. Remember, sweet,
 He said there was a clew! I hold it. Come!

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The end of the Yew-tree Avenue
under MILDRED'S window. A light seen
through a central red pane*

Enter TRESHAM through the trees.

Again here ! But I cannot lose myself.
The heath—the orchard—I have traversed
glades
And dells and bosky paths which used to
lead
Into green wild-wood depths, bewildering
My boy's adventurous step ; and now they
tend
Hither or soon or late ; the blackest shade
Breaks up, the thronged trunks of the trees
ope wide,
And the dim turret I have fled from fronts
Again my step ; the very river put
Its arm about me and conducted me
To this detested spot. Why then, I'll shun
Their will no longer—do your will with me !
Oh, bitter ! To have reared a towering
scheme
Of happiness, and to behold it razed,
Were nothing : all men hope, and see their
hopes

Frustrate, and grieve awhile, and hope anew :
But I . . . to hope that from a line like ours
No horrid prodigy like this would spring,
Were just as though I hoped that from
these old

Confederates against the sovereign day,
Children of older and yet older sires
(Whose living coral berries dropped, as now
On me, on many a baron's surcoat once,
On many a beauty's wimple) would proceed
No poison-tree, to thrust, from Hell its
root,

Hither and thither its strange snaky arms.
Why came I here? What must I do?—
[*A bell strikes.*]—A bell?

Midnight! and 'tis at midnight . . . Ah, I
catch

—Woods, river, plains, I catch your
meaning now

And I obey you! Hist! This tree will
serve!

[*He retires behind one of the trees. After a
pause, enter MERTOUN cloaked as before.*

Mer. Not time! Beat out thy last
voluptuous beat

Of hope and fear, my heart! I thought
the clock

In the chapel struck as I was pushing thro'
The ferns. And so I shall no more see rise
My love-star! Oh, no matter for the past!
So much the more delicious task to see

Mildred revive: to pluck out, thorn by
thorn,

All traces of the rough forbidden path
My rash love lured her to! Each day
must see

Some fear of hers effaced, some hope
renewed!

Then there will be surprises, unforeseen
Delights in store. I'll not regret the past!

[*The light is placed above in the purple
pane.*

And see, my signal rises! Mildred's star!

I never saw it lovelier than now

It rises for the last time! If it sets,

'Tis that the re-assuring sun may dawn!

[*As he prepares to ascend the last tree of
the avenue, TRESHAM arrests his arm.*

Unhand me—peasant, by your grasp! Here's
gold.

'Twas a mad freak of mine. I said I'd pluck
A branch from the white-blossomed shrub
beneath

The casement there! Take this, and hold
your peace.

Tresh. Into the moonlight yonder, come
with me!

—Out of the shadow!

Mer. I am armed, fool!

Tresh. Yes,

Or no?—You'll come into the light, or no?

My hand is on your throat—refuse!—

Mer. That voice !
Where have I heard . . . no—that was
mild and slow.

I'll come with you ! [*They advance.*]

Tresh. You're armed—that's well.
Your name—who are you ?

Mer. (Tresham !—she is lost !)

Tresh. Oh, silent ? Do you know, you
bear yourself

Exactly as, in curious dreams I've had
How felons, this wild earth is full of, look
When they're detected, still your kind has
looked !

The bravo holds an assured countenance,
The thief is voluble and plausible,
But silently the slave of lust has crouched
When I have fancied it before a man !
Your name ?

Mer. I do conjure Lord Tresham—ay,
Kissing his foot, if so I might prevail—
That he for his own sake forbear to ask
My name ! As Heaven's above, his future
weal

Or woe depends upon my silence ! Vain !
I read your white inexorable face !
Know me, Lord Tresham ! [*He throws off
his disguises.*]

Tresh.

Mertoun !

[*After a pause.*]

Draw now !

Mer.

Hear me

But speak first !

Tresh. Not one least word on your
life !

Be sure that I will strangle in your throat
The least word that informs me how you
live

And yet seem what you seem ! No doubt
'twas you

Taught Mildred still to keep that face and
sin !

We should join hands in frantic sympathy
If you once taught me the unteachable,
Explained how you can live so, and so lie !
With God's help I retain, despite my sense,
The old belief—a life like yours is still
Impossible ! Now draw !

Mer. Not for my sake,
Do I entreat a hearing—for your sake,
And most, for her sake !

Tresh. Ha, ha, what should I
Know of your ways ? A miscreant like
yourself,
How must one rouse his ire ?—A blow ?—
that's pride
No doubt, to him ! one spurns him, does
one not ?

Or sets the foot upon his mouth—or spits
Into his face ! Come—-which, or all of
these ?

Mer. 'Twixt him, and me, and Mildred,
Heaven be judge !
Can I avoid this ? Have your will, my Lord !

[*He draws, and, after a few passes, falls.*

Tresh. You are not hurt?

Mer. You'll hear me now !

Tresh. But rise !

Mer. Ah, Tresham, say I not "you'll hear me now !"

And what procures a man the right to speak
In his defence before his fellow-man,
But—I suppose—the thought that presently
He may have leave to speak before his God
His whole defence ?

Tresh. Not hurt ? It cannot be !
You made no effort to resist me. Where
Did my sword reach you ? Why not have
returned

My thrusts ? Hurt where ?

Mer. My lord—

Tresh. How young he is !

Mer. Lord Tresham, I am very young,
and yet

I have entangled other lives with mine.
Do let me speak—and do believe my speech,
That when I die before you presently,—

Tresh. Can you stay here till I return
with help ?

Mer. Oh, stay by me ! When I was
less than boy

I did you grievous wrong, and knew it
not—

Upon my honour, knew it not ! Once known,
I could not find what seemed a better way

To right you than I took : my life—you feel
How less than nothing had been giving you
The life you've taken? But I thought my
way

The better—only for your sake and hers.
And as you have decided otherwise,
Would I had an infinity of lives
To offer you! — now say—instruct me —
think!

Can you from out the minutes I have left
Eke out my reparation? Oh—think—think!
For I must wring a partial—dare I say,
Forgiveness from you, ere I die?

Tresh.

I do

Forgive you.

Mer. Wait and ponder that great
word!

Because, if you forgive me, I shall hope
To speak to you of—Mildred!

Tresh.

Mertoun,—haste

And anger have undone us. 'Tis not you
Should tell me for a novelty you're young—
Thoughtless—unable to recall the past!
Be but your pardon ample as my own!

Mer. Ah, Tresham, that a sword-stroke
and a drop

Of blood or two, should bring all this about!
Why, 'twas my very fear of you—my love
Of you—(what passion's like a boy's for one
Like you?)—that ruined me! I dreamed of
you—

You, all accomplished, courted everywhere,
The scholar and the gentleman. I burned
To knit myself to you—but I was young,
And your surpassing reputation kept me
So far aloof—oh, wherefore all that love?
With less of love, my glorious yesterday
Of praise and gentle words and kindest
looks,

Had taken place perchance six months ago!
Even now—how happy we had been! And
yet

I know the thought of this escaped you,
Tresham!

Let me look up into your face—I feel
'Tis changed above me—yet my eyes are
glazed.

Where? where?

*[As he endeavours to raise himself, his eye
catches the lamp.]*

Ah, Mildred! What will Mildred do?
Tresham, her life is bound up in the life
That's bleeding fast away!—I'll live—must
live,

There! if you'll only turn me I shall live
And save her! Tresham—oh, had you but
heard!

Had you but heard! What right have you
to set

The thoughtless foot upon her life and mine,
And then say, as we perish, "Had I
thought,

"All had gone otherwise." We've sinned
and die :

Never you sin, Lord Tresham!—for you'll
die,

And God will judge you.

Tresh. Yes, be satisfied—
That process is begun.

Mer. And she sits there
Waiting for me. Now, say you this to her—
You—not another—say, I saw him die
As he breathed this—"I love her"—(you
don't know

What those three small words mean) say,
loving her

Lowers me down the bloody slope to death
With memories . . . I speak to her—not
you,

Who had no pity—will have no remorse,
Perchance intend her . . . Die along with
me,

Dear Mildred!—'tis so easy—and you'll 'scape
So much unkindness ! Can I lie at rest,
Wth rude speech spoken to you, ruder deeds
Done to you—heartless men to have my
heart,

And I tied down with grave-clothes and the
worm,

Aware, perhaps, of every blow—Oh God!—
Upon those lips—yet of no power to tear
The felon stripe by stripe? Die, Mildred !

Leave

Their honourable world to them—for God
We're good enough, tho' the world casts us
out !

[*A whistle is heard.*

Tresh. Ho, Gerard !

Enter GERARD, AUSTIN, and GUENDOLEN,
with lights.

No one speak ! you see what's done !
I cannot bear another voice !

Mer. There's light—

Light all about me and I move to it.
Tresham, did I not tell you—did you not
Just promise to deliver words of mine
To Mildred ?

Tresh. I will bear those words to her.

Mer. Now ?

Tresh. Now ! Lift you the body, Gerard,
and leave me

The head.

[*As they have half raised MERTOUN, he
turns suddenly.*

Mer. I knew they turned me—turn me
not from her !

There ! stay you ! there !

[*Dies.*

Guen. [*After a pause.*] Austin, remain you
here

With Thorold until Gerard comes with help—
Then lead him to his chamber. I must go
To Mildred.

Tresh. Guendolen, I hear each word

You utter—did you hear him bid me give
His message? Did you hear my promise? I,
And only I, see Mildred!

Guen. She will die.

Tresh. Oh no, she will not die! I dare
not hope
She'll die. What ground have you to think
she'll die?

Why, Austin's with you!

Aus. Had we but arrived
Before you fought!

Tresh. There was no fight at all!
He let me slaughter him—the boy!—I'll
trust

The body there to you and Gerard—thus!
Now bear him on before me.

Aus. Whither bear him?

Tresh. Oh, to my chamber. When we
meet there next,
We shall be friends.

[*They bear out the body of MERTOUN.*

Will she die, Guendolen?

Guen. Where are you taking me?

Tresh. He fell just here!
Now answer me. Shall you in your whole
life

—You who have nought to do with
Mertoun's fate,

Now you have seen his breast upon the turf,
Shall you e'er walk this way if you can help?
When you and Austin wander arm in arm

Thro' our ancestral grounds, will not a
shade

Be ever on the meadow and the waste—
Another kind of shade than when the night
Shuts the woodside with all its whispers
up!

But will you ever so forget his breast
As willingly to cross this bloody turf
Under the black yew avenue? That's well!
You turn your head! and *I* then?—

Guen. What is done
Is done! My care is for the living.
Thorold,

Bear up against this burthen—more remains
To set the neck to!

Tresh. Dear and ancient trees
My fathers planted, and I loved so well!
What have I done that, like some fabled
crime

Of yore, lets loose a fury leading thus
Her miserable dance amidst you all?
Oh, never more for me shall winds intone
With all your tops a vast antiphony,
Demanding and responding in God's praise!
Hers ye are now — not mine! Farewell
—Farewell!

SCENE II.—MILDRED'S *Chamber*. MILDRED
alone.

He comes not ! I have heard of those who
 seemed
Resourceless in prosperity,—you thought
Sorrow might slay them when she listed—
 yet
Did they so gather up their diffused strength
At her first menace, but they bade her strike,
And stood and laughed her subtlest skill to
 scorn.
Oh, 'tis not so with me ! the first woe fell,
And the rest fall upon it, not on me :
Else should I bear that Henry comes not?—
 fails
Just this first night out of so many nights ?
Loving is done with ! Were he sitting
 now,
As so few hours since, on that seat, we'd
 love
No more—contrive no thousand happy ways
To hide love from the loveless, any more !
I think I might have urged some little point
In my defence, to Thorold ; he was breath-
 less
For the least hint of a defence ; but no !
The first shame over, all that would might
 fall.
No Henry ! Yet I merely sit and think

The morn's deed o'er and o'er. I must have
crept

Out of myself. A Mildred that has lost
Her lover—oh, I dare not look upon
Such woe! I crouch away from it! 'Tis she,
Mildred, will break her heart, not I! The
world

Forsakes me—only Henry's left me—left?
When I have lost him, for he does not
come,

And I sit stupidly. . . . Oh Heaven,
break up

This worse than anguish, this mad apathy,
By any means or any messenger!

Tresh. [*Without.*] Mildred!

Mil. Come in! Heaven hears me!

[*TRESHAM enters.*] You? alone?

Oh, no more cursing!

Tresh. Mildred, I must sit.

There—you sit!

Mil. Say it, Thorold—do not look
The curse—deliver all you come to say!
What must become of me? Oh speak that
thought

Which makes your brow and cheek so pale!

Tresh. My thought?

Mil. All of it!

Tresh. How we waded—years ago—
After those water-lilies, till the plash,
I know not how, surprised us; and you
dared

Neither advance nor turn back, so we stood
 Laughing and crying until Gerard came—
 Once safe upon the turf, the loudest, too,
 For once more reaching the relinquished
 prize!

How idle thoughts are—some men's—dying
 men's!

Mildred,—

Mil. You call me kindlier by my name
 Than even yesterday—what is in that?

Tresh. It weighs so much upon my mind
 that I

This morning took an office not my own!
 I might . . . of course, I must be glad or
 grieved,

Content or not, at every little thing
 That touches you—I may with a wrung
 heart

Even reprove you, Mildred; I did more—
 Will you forgive me?

Mil. Thorold? do you mock? . . .
 Or no . . . and yet you bid me . . . say that
 word!

Tresh. Forgive me, Mildred!—are you
 silent, sweet?

Mil. [*Starting up.*] Why does not Henry
 Mertoun come to-night?

Are you, too, silent?

[*Dashing his mantle aside, and pointing
 to his scabbard, which is empty.*

Ah, this speaks for you!

You've murdered Henry Mertoun! now
proceed!

What is it I must pardon? This and all?

Well, I do pardon you—I think I do.

Thorold, how very wretched you must be!

Tresh. He bade me tell you. . . .

Mil.

What I do forbid

Your utterance of! so much that you may
tell

And will not—how you murdered him . . .
but, no!

You'll tell me that he loved me, never more
Than bleeding out his life there—must I say
“Indeed” to that? Enough! I pardon you!

Tresh. You cannot, Mildred! for the harsh
words, yes:

Of this last deed Another's Judge—whose
doom

I wait in doubt, despondency, and fear.

Mil. Oh true! there's nought for me to
pardon! True!

You loosed my soul of all its cares at once—
Death makes me sure of him for ever! *You*
Tell me his last words? *He* shall tell me
them,

And take my answer—not in words, but
reading

Himself the heart I had to read him late,

Which death . . .

Tresh.

Death? you are dying too?

Well said

Of Guendolen ! I dared not hope you'd
die—

But she was sure of it.

Mil. Tell Guendolen I loved
her, and tell Austin . . .

Tresh. . . . Him you loved—
And me ?

Mil. Ah, Thorold ! was't not rashly
done

To quench that blood, on fire with youth
and hope

And love of me, whom you loved too, and
yet

Suffered to sit here waiting his approach
While you were slaying him ? Oh, doubt-
lessly

You let him speak his poor confused boy's-
speech

—Do his poor utmost to disarm your wrath
And respite me !—you let him try to give
The story of our loves, and ignorance,
And the brief madness, and the long despair—
You let him plead all this, because your code
Of honour bids you hear before you strike :
But at the end, as he looked up for life
Into your eyes—you struck him down !

Tresh. No ! no !

Had I but heard him—had I let him speak
Half the truth—less—had I looked long on
him,

I had desisted ! Why, as he lay there,

The moon on his flushed cheek, I gathered all
The story ere he told it ! I saw thro'
The troubled surface of his crime and yours
A depth of purity immovable !
Had I but glanced, where all seemed turbidest,
Had gleamed some inlet to the calm beneath !
I would not glance—my punishment's at hand.
There, Mildred, is the truth ! and you—
say on—

You curse me ?

Mil. As I dare approach that Heaven
Which has not bade a living thing despair,
Which needs no code to keep its grace from
stain,

But bids the vilest worm that turns on it
Desist and be forgiven,—I—forgive not,
But bless you, Thorold, from my soul of
souls ! *[Falls on his neck.*

There ! do not think too much upon the past !
The cloud that's broke was all the same a
cloud

While it stood up between my friend and
you !

You hurt him 'neath its shadow—but is that
So past retrieve ? I have his heart, you
know—

I may dispose of it—I give it you !
It loves you as mine loves ! Confirm me,
Henry ! *[Dies.*

Tresh. I wish thee joy, beloved ! I am glad
In thy full gladness !

Guen. [*Without.*] Mildred ! Tresham !
 [*Entering with AUSTIN.*] Thorold, I could
 desist no longer. Ah, she swoons !

That's well—

Tresh. Oh ! better far than that !

Guen. She's dead !

Let me unlock her arms !

Tresh. She threw them thus
 About my neck, and blessed me, and then died.
 —You'll let them stay now, Guendolen !

Aus. Leave her
 And look to him ! What ails you, Thorold ?

Guen. White
 As she—and whiter ! Austin—quick—this
 side !

Aus. A froth is oozing thro' his clenched
 teeth—
 Both lips, where they're not bitten thro',
 are black !

Speak, dearest Thorold !

Tresh. Something does weigh down
 My neck beside her weight: thanks: I should
 fall

But for you, Austin, I believe !—there, there—
 'Twill pass away soon !—ah,—I had for-
 gotten—

I am dying.

Guen. Thorold—Thorold—why was this ?

Tresh. I said, just as I drank the poison
 off,

The earth would be no longer earth to me,

The life out of all life was gone from me!
 There are blind ways provided, the foredone
 Heart-weary player in this pageant-world
 Drops out by, letting the main masque defile
 By the conspicuous portal:—I am through—
 Just through:—

Guen. Don't leave him, Austin! death
 is close.

Tresh. Already Mildred's face is peace-
 fuller!

I see you, Austin—feel you—here's my hand,
 Put yours in it—You, Guendolen, yours too!
 You're Lord and Lady now — You're
 Treshams—Name

And fame are yours — You hold our
 'Scutcheon up.

Austin, no Blot on it! You see how blood
 Must wash one blot away: the first blot
 came

And the first blood came. To the vain
 world's eye

All's gules again—no care to the vain world,
 From whence the red was drawn!

Aus. No blot shall come!

Tresh. I said that—yet it did come.
 Should it come,

Vengeance is God's not man's. Remember
 me!

Guen. [*Letting fall the pulseless arm.*] [*Dies.*]

Ah, Thorold, we can but—remember
 you!

IN A GONDOLA.

He sings.

I SEND my heart up to thee, all my heart
In this my singing !
For the stars help me, and the sea bears
part ;
The very night is clinging
Closer to Venice' streets to leave one space
Above me, whence thy face
May light my joyous heart to thee its
dwelling-place.

She speaks.

Say after me, and try to say
My very words, as if each word
Came from you of your own accord,
In your own voice, in your own way :
" This woman's heart, and soul, and brain
" Are mine as much as this gold chain
" She bids me wear ; which " (say again)
" I choose to make by cherishing
" A precious thing, or choose to fling
" Over the boat-side, ring by ring."
And yet once more say . . . no word more !
Since words are only words. Give o'er !
Unless you call me, all the same,
Familiarly by my pet-name

Which, if the Three should hear you call,
And me reply to, would proclaim
At once our secret to them all :
Ask of me, too, command me, blame—
Do break down the partition-wall
'Twixt us, the daylight world beholds
Curtained in dusk and splendid folds.
What's left but—all of me to take ?
I am the Three's ; prevent them, slake
Your thirst ! 'Tis said, the Arab sage
In practising with gems can loose
Their subtle spirit in his cruce
And leave but ashes : so, sweet mage,
Leave them my ashes when thy use
Sucks out my soul, thy heritage !

He sings.

I.

Past we glide, and past, and past !
What's that poor Agnese doing
Where they make the shutters fast ?
Gray Zanobi's just a-wooing
To his couch the purchased bride :
Past we glide !

II.

Past we glide, and past, and past !
Why's the Pucci Palace flaring
Like-a beacon to the blast ?
Guests by hundreds—not one caring

If the dear host's neck were wried :
Past we glide !

She sings.

I.

The Moth's kiss, first !
Kiss me as if you made believe
You were not sure, this eve,
How my face, your flower, had pursed
Its petals up ; so, here and there
You brush it, till I grow aware
Who wants me, and wide open burst.

II.

The Bee's kiss, now !
Kiss me as if you entered gay
My heart at some noonday,
A bud that dares not disallow
The claim, so all is rendered up,
And passively its shattered cup
Over your head to sleep I bow.

He sings.

I.

What are we two ?
I am a Jew,
And carry thee, farther than friends can
pursue,

To a feast of our tribe,
Where they need thee to bribe
The devil that blasts them unless he imbibe
Thy . . . Shatter the vision for ever ! And
 now,
As of old, I am I, Thou art Thou !

II.

Say again, what we are ?
The sprite of a star,
I lure thee above where the Destinies bar
My plumes their full play
Till a ruddier ray
Than my pale one announce there is withering away
Some . . . Shatter the vision for ever ! And
 now,
As of old, I am I, Thou art Thou !

He muses.

Oh, which were best, to roam or rest ?
The land's lap or the water's breast ?
To sleep on yellow millet-sheaves,
Or swim in lucid shallows, just
Eluding water-lily leaves,
An inch from Death's black fingers, thrust
To lock you, whom release he must ;
Which life were best on Summer eves ?

He speaks, musing.

Lie back ; could thought of mine improve
you ?

From this shoulder let there spring
A wing ; from this, another wing ;
Wings, not legs and feet, shall move you !
Snow-white must they spring, to blend
With your flesh, but I intend
They shall deepen to the end,
Broader, into burning gold,
Till both wings crescent-wise enfold
Your perfect self, from 'neath your feet
To o'er your head, where, lo, they meet
As if a million sword-blades hurled
Defiance from you to the world !
Rescue me thou, the only real !
And scare away this mad Ideal
That came, nor notions to depart !
Thanks ! Now, stay ever as thou art !

Still he muses.

I.

What if the Three should catch at last
Thy serenader ? While there's cast
Paul's cloak about my head, and fast
Gian pinions me, Himself has past
His stylet thro' my back ; I reel ;
And . . . is it Thou I feel ?

II.

They trail me, these three godless knaves,
Past every church that sains and saves,
Nor stop till, where the cold sea raves
By Lido's wet accursed graves,
They scoop mine, roll me to its brink,
And . . . on Thy breast I sink !

She replies, musing.

Dip your arm o'er the boat-side, elbow-deep,
As I do : thus : were Death so unlike Sleep,
Caught this way ? Death's to fear from
 flame, or steel,
Or poison doubtless ; but from water—feel !

Go find the bottom ! Would you stay me ?
 There !

Now pluck a great blade of that ribbon-grass
To plait in where the foolish jewel was,
I flung away : since you have praised my
 hair,

'Tis proper to be choice in what I wear.

He speaks.

Row home ? must we row home ? Too surely
Know I where its front's demurely
Over the Giudecca piled ;
Window just with window mating,
Door on door exactly waiting,
All's the set face of a child :

But behind it, where's a trace
Of the staidness and reserve,
And formal lines without a curve,
In the same child's playing-face?
No two windows look one way
O'er the small sea-water thread
Below them. Ah, the autumn day
I, passing, saw you overhead!
First, out a cloud of curtain blew,
Then, a sweet cry, and last, came you—
To catch your loory that must needs
Escape just then, of all times then,
To peck a tall plant's fleecy seeds,
And make me happiest of men.
I scarce could breathe to see you reach
So far back o'er the balcony
(To catch him ere he climbed too high
Above you in the Smyrna peach)
That quick the round smooth cord of gold,
This coiled hair on your head, unrolled,
Fell down you like a gorgeous snake
The Roman girls were wont, of old,
When Rome there was, for coolness' sake
To let lie curling o'er their bosoms.
Dear loory, may his beak retain
Ever its delicate rose stain
As if the wounded lotus-blossoms
Had marked their thief to know again!
Stay longer yet, for others' sake
Than mine! what should your chamber do?
—With all its rarities that ache

In silence while day lasts, but wake
At night-time and their life renew,
Suspended just to pleasure you
—That brought against their will together
These objects, and, while day lasts, weave
Around them such a magic tether
That they look dumb : your harp, believe,
With all the sensitive tight strings
That dare not speak, now to itself
Breathes slumbrously as if some elf
Went in and out the chords, his wings
Make murmur wheresoe'er they graze,
As an angel may, between the maze
Of midnight palace-pillars, on
And on, to sow God's plagues have gone
Through guilty glorious Babylon.
And while such murmurs flow, the nymph
Bends o'er the harp-top from her shell,
As the dry limpet for the lymph
Come with a tune he knows so well.
And how your statues' hearts must swell !
And how your pictures must descend
To see each other, friend with friend !
Oh, could you take them by surprise,
You'd find Schidone's eager Duke
Doing the quaintest courtesies
To that prim Saint by Haste-thee-Luke :
And, deeper into her rock den,
Bold Castelfranco's Magdalen
You'd find retreated from the ken
Of that robed counsel-keeping Ser—

As if the Tizian thinks of her,
And is not, rather, gravely bent
On seeing for himself what toys
Are these, his progeny invent,
What litter now the board employs
Whereon he signed a document
That got him murdered ! Each enjoys
Its night so well, you cannot break
The sport up, so, indeed must make
More stay with me, for others' sake

She speaks.

I.

To-morrow, if a harp-string, say,
Is used to tie the jasmine back
That overflows my room with sweets,
Contrive your Zorzi somehow meets
My Zanze : if the ribbon's black,
The Three are watching ; keep away.

II.

Your gondola—let Zorzi wreath
A mesh of water-weeds about
Its prow, as if he unaware
Had struck some quay or bridge-foot stair ;
That I may throw a paper out
As you and he go underneath.

CRISTINA.

I.

SHE should never have looked at me,
If she meant I should not love her !
There are plenty . . . men, you call such,
I suppose . . . she may discover
All her soul to, if she pleases,
And yet leave much as she found them :
But I'm not so, and she knew it
When she fixed me, glancing round them.

II.

What? To fix me thus meant nothing?
But I can't tell . . . there's my weak-
ness . . .
What her look said!—no vile cant, sure,
About "need to strew the bleakness
"Of some lone shore with its pearl-seed,
"That the Sea feels"—no "strange
yearning
"That such souls have, most to lavish
"Where there's chance of least returning."

III.

Oh, we're sunk enough here, God knows!
But not quite so sunk that moments,
Sure tho' seldom, are denied us,
When the spirit's true endowments

Stand out plainly from its false ones,
And apprise it if pursuing
Or the right way or the wrong way,
To its triumph or undoing.

IV.

There are flashes struck from midnights,
There are fire-flames noondays kindle,
Whereby piled-up honours perish,
Whereby sworn ambitions dwindle,
While just this or that poor impulse,
Which for once had play unstifled,
Seems the sole work of a life-time
That away the rest have trifled.

V.

Doubt you it, in some such moment,
As she fixed me, she felt clearly,
Ages past the soul existed,
Here an age 'tis resting merely,
And hence, fleets again for ages :
While the true end, sole and single,
It stops here for is, this love-way,
With some other soul to mingle ?

VI.

Else it loses what it lived for,
And eternally must lose it ;
Better ends may be in prospect,
Deeper blisses, if you choose it,

But this life's end and this love-bliss
Have been lost here. Doubt you whether
This she felt, as, looking at me,
Mine and her souls rushed together ?

VII.

Oh, observe ! Of course, next moment,
The world's honours, in derision,
Trampled out the light for ever :
Never fear but there's provision
Of the Devil's to quench knowledge
Lest we walk the earth in rapture !
—Making those who catch God's secret
Just so much more prize their capture.

VIII.

Such am I : the secret's mine now !
She has lost me—I have gained her !
Her soul's mine : and, thus, grown perfect,
I shall pass my life's remainder,
Life will just hold out the proving
Both our powers, alone and blended—
And then, come the next life quickly !
This world's use will have been ended.

PICTOR IGNOTUS.

[FLORENCE, 15—.]

I COULD have painted pictures like that
youth's
Ye praise so. How my soul springs up!
No bar
Stayed me—ah, thought which 'saddens while
it soothes!—
Never did fate forbid me, star by star,
To outburst on your night with all my gift
Of fires from God: nor would my flesh
have shrunk
From seconding my soul, with eyes uplift
And wide to Heaven, or, straight like
thunder, sunk
To the centre, of an instant; or around
Turned calmly and inquisitive, to scan
The license and the limit, space and bound,
Allowed to Truth made visible in Man.
And, like that youth ye praise so, all I saw,
Over the canvass could my hand have flung,
Each face obedient to its passion's law,
Each passion clear proclaimed without a
tongue;
Whether Hope rose at once in all the blood,
A-tiptoe for the blessing of embrace,

Or Rapture drooped the eyes, as when her
brood
Pull down the nesting dove's heart to its
place,
Or Confidence lit swift the forehead up,
And locked the mouth fast, like a castle
braved,—
O Human faces, hath it spilt, my cup?
What did ye give me that I have not saved?
Nor will I say I have not dreamed (how well!)
Of going—I, in each new picture,—forth,
As, making new hearts beat and bosoms
swell,
To Pope or Kaiser, East, West, South or
North,
Bound for the calmly satisfied great State,
Or glad aspiring little burgh, it went,
Flowers cast upon the car which bore the
freight,
Through old streets named afresh from its
event,
Till it reached home, where learned Age
should greet
My face, and Youth, the star not yet
distinct
Above his hair, lie learning at my feet!—
Oh, thus to live, I and my picture, linked
With love about, and praise, till life should
end,
And then not go to Heaven, but linger
here,

Here on my earth, earth's every man my
friend,—

The thought grew frightful, 'twas so
wildly dear!

But a voice changed it! Glimpses of such
sights

Have scared me, like the revels thro' a
door

Of some strange House of Idols at its rites ;

This world seemed not the world it was
before!

Mixed with my loving trusting ones there
trooped

. . . Who summoned those cold faces that
begun

To press on me and judge me? 'Tho' I
stooped

Shrinking, as from the soldiery a nun,

They drew me forth, and spite of me . . .
enough!

These buy and sell our pictures, take and
give,

Count them for garniture and household stuff,
And where they live our pictures needs
must live,

And see their faces, listen to their prate,

Partakers of their daily pettiness,

Discussed of,—“This I love, or this I
hate,

“This likes me more, and this affects me
less!”

Wherefore I chose my portion. If at whiles
My heart sinks, as monotonous I paint
These endless cloisters and eternal aisles
With the same series, Virgin, Babe, and
Saint,
With the same cold, calm, beautiful regard,
At least no merchant traffics in my heart ;
The sanctuary's gloom at least shall ward
Vain tongues from where my pictures
stand apart ;
Only prayer breaks the silence of the shrine
While, blackening in the daily candle-
smoke,
They moulder on the damp wall's travertine,
'Mid echoes the light footstep never woke.
So die, my pictures ; surely, gently die !
Oh, youth, men praise so,—holds their
praise its worth ?
Blown harshly, keeps the trump its golden
cry ?
Tastes sweet the water with such specks
of earth ?

THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY.

A MIDDLE-AGE INTERLUDE.

(*In the original*) ROSA MUNDI ; SEU, FULCITE
 ME FLORIBUS. A CONCEIT OF MASTER
 GYSBRECHT, CANON-REGULAR OF SAINT
 JODOCUS-BY-THE-BAR, YPRES CITY. CAN-
 TUQUE, *Virgilius*. AND HATH OFTEN
 BEEN SUNG AT HOCK-TIDE AND FESTI-
 VALS. GAVISUS ERAM, *Jessides*.

(It would seem to be a glimpse from the
 burning of Jacques du Bourg-Molay, at
 Paris, A.D. 1314 ; as distorted by the re-
 fraction from Flemish brain to brain, during
 the course of a couple of centuries.—R. B.)

I.

PREADMONISHETH THE ABBOT DEODAET

THE Lord, we look to once for all,
 Is the Lord we should look at, all at once :
 He knows not to vary, saith St. Paul,
 Nor the shadow of turning, for the nonce.
 See Him no other than as he is ;
 Give both the Infinites their due—
 Infinite mercy, but, I wis,
 As infinite a justice too.
[*Organ : plagal cadence.*
 As infinite a justice too.

II.

ONE SINGETH.

John, Master of the Temple of God,
Falling to sin the Unknown Sin,
What he bought of Emperor Aldabrod,
He sold it to Sultan Saladin—
Till, caught by Pope Clement, a-buzzing there,
Hornet-prince of the mad wasps' hive,
And clipt of his wings in Paris square,
They bring him now to be burned alive.

[*And wanteth there grace of lute or
clavicithern, ye shall say to confirm
him who singeth—*

We bring John now to be burned alive.

III.

In the midst is a goodly gallows built ;
'Twixt fork and fork, a stake is stuck ;
But first they set divers tumbrils a-tilt,
Make a trench all round with the city
muck ;
Inside they pile log upon log, good store ;
Faggots not few, blocks great and small,
Reach a man's mid-thigh, no less, no more,—
For they mean he should roast in the sight
of all.

CHORUS.

We mean he should roast in the sight
of all.

IV.

Good sappy bavins that kindle forthwith ;
 Billets that blaze substantial and slow ;
 Pine-stump split deftly, dry as pith ;
 Larch-heart that chars to a chalk-white
 glow :
 Then up they hoist me John in a chafe,
 Sling him fast like a hog to scorch,
 Spit in his face, then leap back safe,
 Sing " Laudes " and bid clap-to the torch.

CHORUS.

Laus Deo—who bids clap-to the torch.

V.

John of the Temple, whose fame so bragged,
 Is burning alive in Paris square !
 How can he curse, if his mouth is gagged ?
 Or wriggle his neck, with a collar there ?
 Or heave his chest, while a band goes round ?
 Or threat with his fist, since his arms are
 spliced ?
 Or kick with his feet, now his legs are
 bound ?
 —Thinks John—I will call upon Jesus
 Christ. [*Here one crosseth himself.*]

VI.

Jesus Christ—John had bought and sold,
 Jesus Christ—John had eaten and drunk ;

To him, the Flesh meant silver and gold.

(*Salva reverentia.*)

Now it was, "Saviour, bountiful lamb,
I have roasted thee Turks, though men
roast me.

See thy servant, the plight wherein I am!
Art thou a Saviour? Save thou me!"

CHORUS.

'Tis John the mocker cries, Save thou me!

VII.

Who maketh God's menace an idle word?

—Saith, it no more means what it pro-
claims,

Than a damsel's threat to her wanton bird?—

For she too prattles of ugly names.

—Saith, he knoweth but one thing,—what
he knows;

That God is good and the rest is breath;

Why else is the same styled, Sharon's rose?

Once a rose, ever a rose, he saith.

CHORUS.

O, John shall yet find a rose, he saith!

VIII.

Alack, there be roses and roses, John!

Some, honied of taste like your leman's
tongue:

Some, bitter—for why? (roast gaily on!)
Their tree struck root in devil's dung!
When Paul once reasoned of righteousness
And of temperance and of judgment to
come,
Good Felix trembled, he could no less—
John, snickering, crook'd his wicked
thumb?

CHORUS.

What cometh to John of the wicked
thumb?

IX.

Ha ha, John plucks now at his rose
To rid himself of a sorrow at heart!
Lo,—petal on petal, fierce rays uncloset
Anther on anther, sharp spikes outstart;
And with blood for dew, the bosom boils;
And a gust of sulphur is all its smell
And lo, he is horribly in the toils
Of a coal-black giant flower of Hell!

CHORUS.

What maketh Heaven, that maketh Hell.

X.

So, as John called now, through the fire
amain,
On the Name, he had cursed with, all his
life—

To the Person, he bought and sold again—
 For the Face, with his daily buffets rife—
 Feature by feature It took its place!
 And his voice like a mad dog's choking
 bark
 At the steady Whole of the Judge's Face—
 Died. Forth John's soul flared into the
 dark.

SUBJOINETH THE ABBOT DEODAET.

God help all poor souls lost in the dark.

AN EPISTLE.

CONTAINING THE STRANGE MEDICAL EXPERI-
 ENCE OF KARSHISH, THE ARAB PHYSICIAN.

KARSHISH, the picker-up of learning's crumbs,
 The not-incurious in God's handiwork
 (This man's-flesh He hath admirably made,
 Blown like a bubble, kneaded like a paste,
 To coop up and keep down on earth a space
 That puff of vapour from His mouth, man's
 soul)

—To Abib, all-sagacious in our art,
 Breeder in me of what poor skill I boast,
 Like me inquisitive how pricks and cracks
 Befall the flesh through too much stress and
 strain,

Whereby the wily vapour fain would slip
Back and rejoin its source before the term, —
And aptest in contrivance, under God,
To baffle it by deftly stopping such :—
The vagrant Scholar to his Sage at home
Sends greeting (health and knowledge, fame
with peace)
Three samples of true snake-stone—rarer
still,
One of the other sort, the melon-shaped,
(But fitter, pounded fine, for charms than
drugs)
And writeth now the twenty-second time.

My journeyings were brought to Jericho,
Thus I resume. Who studious in our art
Shall count a little labour unpaid?
I have shed sweat enough, left flesh and bone
On many a flinty furlong of this land.
Also the country-side is all on fire
With rumours of a marching hitherward—
Some say Vespasian cometh, some, his son.
A black lynx snarled and pricked a tufted
ear;
Lust of my blood inflamed his yellow balls:
I cried and threw my staff and he was gone.
Twice have the robbers stripped and beaten
me,
And once a town declared me for a spy,
But at the end, I reach Jerusalem,
Since this poor covert where I pass the night,

This Bethany, lies scarce the distance thence
A man with plague-sores at the third degree
Runs till he drops down dead. Thou laugh-
est here !

'Sooth, it elates me, thus reposed and safe,
To void the stuffing of my travel-scrip
And share with thee whatever Jewry yields.
A viscid choler is observable
In tertians, I was nearly bold to say,
And falling-sickness hath a happier cure
Than our school wots of : there's a spider here
Weaves no web, watches on the ledge of
tombs,

Sprinkled with mottles on an ash-gray back ;
Take five and drop them . . . but who
knows his mind,

The Syrian run-a-gate I trust this to ?
His service payeth me a sublimate
Blown up his nose to help the ailing eye.
Best wait : I reach Jerusalem at morn,
There set in order my experiences,
Gather what most deserves and give thee all—
Or I might add, Judea's gum-tragacanth
Scales off in purer flakes, shines clearer-
grained,

Cracks 'twixt the pestle and the porphyry,
In fine exceeds our produce. Scalp-disease
Confounds me, crossing so with leprosy—
Thou hadst admired one sort I gained at
Zoar—

But zeal outruns discretion. Here I end.

Yet stay : my Syrian blinketh gratefully,
Protesteth his devotion is my price—
Suppose I write what harms not, though he
steal?

I half resolve to tell thee, yet I blush,
What set me off a-writing first of all.
An itch I had, a sting to write, a tang !
For, be it this town's barrenness—or else
The Man had something in the look of him—
His case has struck me far more than 'tis
worth.

So, pardon if—(lest presently I lose
In the great press of novelty at hand
The care and pains this somehow stole from
me)

I bid thee take the thing while fresh in mind,
Almost in sight—for, wilt thou have the
truth?

The very man is gone from me but now,
Whose ailment is the subject of discourse.
Thus then, and let thy better wit help all.

'Tis but a case of mania—subinduced
By epilepsy, at the turning-point
Of trance prolonged unduly some three days,
When by the exhibition of some drug
Or spell, exorcisation, stroke of art
Unknown to me and which 'twere well to
know,

The evil thing out-breaking all at once
Left the man whole and sound of body indeed,—

But, flinging, so to speak, life's gates too wide,

Making a clear house of it too suddenly,
The first conceit that entered pleased to write

Whatever it was minded on the wall
So plainly at that vantage, as it were,
(First come, first served) that nothing subsequent

Attaineth to erase the fancy-scrawls
Which the returned and new-established soul
Hath gotten now so thoroughly by heart
That henceforth she will read or these or none.

And first—the man's own firm conviction rests

That he was dead (in fact they buried him)
—That he was dead and then restored to life
By a Nazarene physician of his tribe :
—'Sayeth, the same bade " Rise," and he did rise.

" Such cases are diurnal," thou wilt cry.
Not so this figment !—not, that such a fume,
Instead of giving way to time and health,
Should eat itself into the life of life,
As saffron tingeth flesh, blood, bones and all !

For see, how he takes up the after-life.
The man—it is one Lazarus a Jew,
Sanguine, proportioned, fifty years of age,
The body's habit wholly laudable.

As much, indeed, beyond the common health
As he were made and put aside to shew.
Think, could we penetrate by any drug
And bathe the wearied soul and worried flesh,
And bring it clear and fair, by three days'
sleep!

Whence has the man the balm that brightens
all?

This grown man eyes the world now like a
child.

Some elders of his tribe, I should premise,
Led in their friend, obedient as a sheep,
To bear my inquisition. While they spoke,
Now sharply, now with sorrow,—told the
case,—

He listened not except I spoke to him,
But folded his two hands and let them talk,
Watching the flies that buzzed: and yet no
fool.

And that's a sample how his years must go.
Look if a beggar, in fixed middle-life,
Should find a treasure, can he use the same
With straightened habits and with tastes
starved small,

And take at once to his impoverished brain
The sudden element that changes things,
—That sets the undreamed-of rapture at his
hand,

And puts the cheap old joy in the scorned dust?
Is he not such an one as moves to mirth—
Warily parsimonious, when's no need,

Wasteful as drunkenness at undue times ?
All prudent counsel as to what befits
The golden mean, is lost on such an one.
The man's fantastic will is the man's law.
So here—we'll call the treasure knowledge,
say—

Increased beyond the fleshly faculty—
Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth,
Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing
Heaven.

The man is witless of the size, the sum,
The value in proportion of all things,
Or whether it be little or be much.
Discourse to him of prodigious armaments
Assembled to besiege his city now,
And of the passing of a mule with gourds—
'Tis one ! Then take it on the other side,
Speak of some trifling fact—he will gaze
rapt

With stupor at its very littleness—
(Far as I see) as if in that indeed
He caught prodigious import, whole results ;
And so will turn to us the bystanders
In ever the same stupor (note this point)
That we too see not with his opened eyes !
Wonder and doubt come wrongly into play,
Preposterously, at cross purposes.
Should his child sicken unto death,—why,
look

For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness,
Or pretermission of his daily craft—

While a word, gesture, glance, from that
same child,

At play or in the school or laid asleep,
Will start him to an agony of fear,
Exasperation, just as like ! demand
The reason why—" 'tis but a word," object—
" A gesture "—he regards thee as our lord
Who lived there in the pyramid alone,
Looked at us, dost thou mind, when being
young

We both would unadvisedly recite
Some charm's beginning, from that book of
his,

Able to bid the sun throb wide and burst
All into stars, as suns grown old are wont.
Thou and the child have each a veil alike
Thrown o'er your heads from under which
ye both

Stretch your blind hands and trifle with a
match

Over a mine of Greek fire, did ye know !
He holds on firmly to some thread of life—
(It is the life to lead perforcedly)
Which runs across some vast distracting orb
Of glory on either side that meagre thread,
Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet—
The spiritual life around the earthly life !
The law of that is known to him as this—
His heart and brain move there, his feet stay
here.

So is the man perplexed with impulses

Sudden to start off crosswise, not straight on,
Proclaiming what is Right and Wrong
across—

And not along—this black thread through
the blaze—

“It should be” balked by “here it cannot be.”
And oft the man’s soul springs into his face
As if he saw again and heard again
His sage that bade him “Rise” and he did
rise.

Something—a word, a tick of the blood
within

Admonishes—then back he sinks at once
To ashes, that was very fire before,
In sedulous recurrence to his trade
Whereby he earneth him the daily bread—
And studiously the humbler for that pride,
Professedly the faultier that he knows
God’s secret, while he holds the thread of life.
Indeed the especial marking of the man
Is prone submission to the Heavenly will—
Seeing it, what it is, and why it is.

’Sayeth, he will wait patient to the last
For that same death which will restore his
being

To equilibrium, body loosening soul
Divorced even now by premature full growth :
He will live, nay, it pleaseth him to live
So long as God please, and just how God
please.

He even seeketh not to please God more

(Which meaneth, otherwise) than as God
please.

Hence I perceive not he affects to preach
The doctrine of his sect whate'er it be—
Make proselytes as madmen thirst to do.
How can he give his neighbour the real
ground,

His own conviction? ardent as he is—
Call his great truth a lie, why still the old
"Be it as God please" reassureth him.
I probed the sore as thy disciple should—
"How, beast," said I, "this stolid careless-
ness

Sufficeth thee, when Rome is on her march
To stamp out like a little spark thy town,
Thy tribe, thy crazy tale and thee at once?"
He merely looked with his large eyes on me.
The man is apathetic, you deduce?
Contrariwise he loves both old and young,
Able and weak—affects the very brutes
And birds—how say I? flowers of the field—
As a wise workman recognises tools
In a master's workshop, loving what they
make.

Thus is the man as harmless as a lamb :
Only impatient, let him do his best,
At ignorance and carelessness and sin—
An indignation which is promptly curbed.
As when in certain travels I have feigned
To be an ignoramus in our art
According to some preconceived design,

And happed to hear the land's practitioners
Steeped in conceit sublimed by ignorance,
Prattle fantastically on disease,
Its cause and cure—and I must hold my
peace!

Thou wilt object—why have I not ere this
Sought out the sage himself, the Nazarene
Who wrought this cure, enquiring at the
source,

Conferring with the frankness that befits?
Alas! it grieveth me, the learned leech
Perished in a tumult many years ago,
Accused,—our learning's fate,—of wizardry,
Rebellion, to the setting up a rule
And creed prodigious as described to me.
His death which happened when the earth-
quake fell

(Prefiguring, as soon appeared, the loss
To occult learning in our lord the sage
That lived there in the pyramid alone)
Was wrought by the mad people—that's
their wont—

On vain recourse, as I conjecture it,
To his tried virtue, for miraculous help—
How could he stop the earthquake? That's
their way!

The other imputations must be lies :
But take one—though I loathe to give it thee,
In mere respect to any good man's fame!
(And after all our patient Lazarus

Is stark mad—should we count on what he says?

Perhaps not—though in writing to a leech
'Tis well to keep back nothing of a case.)

This man so cured regards the curer then,
As—God forgive me—who but God himself,
Creator and Sustainer of the world,

That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile!

—'Sayeth that such an One was born and
lived,

Taught, healed the sick, broke bread at his
own house,

Then died, with Lazarus by, for aught I
know,

And yet was . . . what I said nor choose
repeat,

And must have so avouched himself, in fact,
In hearing of this very Lazarus

Who saith—but why all this of what he
saith?

Why write of trivial matters, things of price
Calling at every moment for remark?

I noticed on the margin of a pool

Blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort,

Aboundeth, very nitrous. It is strange!

Thy pardon for this long and tedious case,
Which, now that I review it, needs must seem
Unduly dwelt on, prolixly set forth.

Nor I myself discern in what is writ

Good cause for the peculiar interest

And awe indeed this man has touched me with.
Perhaps the journey's end, the weariness
Had wrought upon me first. I met him thus—
I crossed a ridge of short sharp broken hills
Like an old lion's cheek-teeth. Out there
came

A moon made like a face with certain spots
Multiform, manifold, and menacing :
Then a wind rose behind me. So we met
In this old sleepy town at unaware,
The man and I. I send thee what is writ.
Regard it as a chance, a matter risked
To this ambiguous Syrian—he may lose,
Or steal, or give it thee with equal good.
Jerusalem's repose shall make amends
For time this letter wastes, thy time and mine,
Till when, once more thy pardon and farewell!

The very God! think, Abib; dost thou
think?

So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too—
So, through the thunder comes a human
voice

Saying, "O heart I made, a heart beats here!
Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself.
Thou hast no power nor may'st conceive of
mine,

But love I gave thee, with Myself to love,
And thou must love me who have died for
thee!"

The madman saith He said so: it is strange.

RABBI BEN EZRA.

I.

Grow old along with me !
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made :
Our times are in His hand
Who saith " A whole I planned,
" Youth shows but half ; trust God : see all
nor be afraid ! "

II.

Not that, amassing flowers,
Youth sighed " Which rose make ours,
" Which lily leave and then as best recall ? "
Not that, admiring stars,
It yearned " Nor Jove, nor Mars ;
" Mine be some figured flame which blends,
transcends them all ! "

III.

Not for such hopes and fears
Annuling youth's brief years,
Do I remonstrate : folly wide the mark !
Rather I prize the doubt
Low kinds exist without,
Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a
spark.

IV.

Poor vaunt of life indeed,
Were man but formed to feed
On joy, to solely seek and find and feast :
Such feasting ended, then
As sure an end to men ;
Irks care the crop-full bird ? Frets doubt the
maw-crammed beast ?

V.

Rejoice we are allied
To That which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive !
A spark disturbs our clod ;
Nearer we hold of God
Who gives, than of His tribes that take,
I must believe.

VI.

Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but
go !
Be our joys three-parts pain !
Strive, and hold cheap the strain ;
Learn, nor account the pang ; dare, never
grudge the throe !

VII.

For thence,—a paradox
Which comforts while it mocks,—
Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail :
What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me :
A brute I might have been, but would not
sink i' the scale.

VIII.

What is he but a brute
Whose flesh has soul to suit,
Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want
play ?
To man, propose this test—
Thy body at its best,
How far can that project thy soul on its
lone way ?

IX.

Yet gifts should prove their use :
I own the Past profuse
Of power each side, perfection every turn
Eyes, ears took in their dole,
Brain treasured up the whole ;
Should not the heart beat once " How good
to live and learn " ?

X.

Not once beat " Praise be Thine !
" I see the whole design,

“I, who saw power, see now love perfect too :

“Perfect I call Thy plan :

“Thanks that I was a man !

“Maker, remake, complete,—I trust what Thou shalt do !”

XI.

For pleasant is this flesh ;

Our soul, in its rose-mesh

Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for rest ;

Would we some prize might hold

To match those manifold

Possessions of the brute,—gain most, as we did best !

XII.

Let us not always say

“Spite of this flesh to-day

“I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole !”

As the bird wings and sings,

Let us cry “All good things

“Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul !”

XIII.

Therefore I summon age

To grant youth's heritage,

Life's struggle having so far reached its term :

Thence shall I pass, approved
A man, for aye removed
From the developed brute ; a god though
in the germ.

XIV.

And I shall thereupon
Take rest, ere I be gone
Once more on my adventure brave and
new :

Fearless and unperplexed,
When I wage battle next,
What weapons to select, what armour to
indue.

XV.

Youth ended, I shall try
My gain or loss thereby ;
Leave the fire ashes, what survives is
gold :

And I shall weigh the same,
Give life its praise or blame :
Young, all lay in dispute ; I shall know,
being old.

XVI.

For note, when evening shuts,
A certain moment cuts
The deed off, calls the glory from the gray :

A whisper from the west
Shoots—"Add this to the rest,
"Take it and try its worth : here dies another
day."

XVII.

So, still within this life,
Though lifted o'er its strife,
Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,
"This rage was right i' the main,
"That acquiescence vain :
"The Future I may face now I have proved
the Past."

XVIII.

For more is not reserved
To man, with soul just nerved
To act to-morrow what he learns to-day :
Here, work enough to watch
The Master work, and catch
Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's
true play.

XIX.

As it was better, youth
Should strive, through acts uncouth,
Toward making, than repose on aught found
made :
So, better, age, exempt
From strife, should know, than tempt
Further. Thou waitedst age : wait death
nor be afraid !

XX.

Enough now, if the Right
And Good and Infinite
Be named here, as thou callest thy hand
thine own,
With knowledge absolute,
Subject to no dispute
From fools that crowded youth, nor let thee
feel alone.

XXI.

Be there, for once and 'all,
Severed great minds from small,
Announced to each his station in the Past !
Was I, the world arraigned,
Were they, my soul disdained,
Right? Let age speak the truth and give
us peace at last !

XXII.

Now, who shall arbitrate ?
Ten men love what I hate,
Shun what I follow, slight what I receive ;
Ten, who in ears and eyes
Match me : we all surmise,
They this thing, and I that : whom shall my
soul believe ?

XXIII.

Not on the vulgar mass
Called "work," must sentence pass,

Things done, that took the eye and had the
price ;

O'er which, from level stand,
The low world laid its hand,
Found straightway to its mind, could value
in a trice :

XXIV.

But all, the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account ;
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled
the man's amount :

XXV.

Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and
escaped ;
All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the
pitcher shaped.

XXVI.

Ay, note that Potter's wheel,
That metaphor ! and feel
Why time spins rast, why passive lies our
clay,—

Thou, to whom fools propound,
When the wine makes its round,
"Since life fleets, all is change ; the Past
gone, seize to-day !"

XXVII.

Fool ! All that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall ;
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand
sure :
What entered into thee,
That was, is, and shall be :
Time's wheel runs back or stops : Potter
and clay endure.

XXVIII.

He fixed thee mid this dance
Of plastic circumstance,
This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain
arrest :
Machinery just meant
To give thy soul its bent,
Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently
impressed.

XXIX.

What though the earlier grooves
Which ran the laughing loves
Around thy base, no longer pause and press ?

What though, about thy rim,
Skull-things in order grim
Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner
stress ?

xxx.

Look not thou down but up !
To uses of a cup,
The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's
peal,
The new wine's foaming flow,
The Master's lips a-glow !
Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what need'st
thou with earth's wheel ?

xxxI.

But I need, now as then.
Thee, God, who moulded men ;
And since, not even while the whirl was
worst,
Did I,—to the wheel of life
With shapes and colours rife,
Bound dizzily,—mistake my end, to slake
Thy thirst :

xxxII.

So, take and use Thy work :
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past
the aim !

My times be in Thy hand !
Perfect the cup as planned !
Let age approve of youth, and death complete
the same !

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS.

I.

WHERE the quiet-coloured end of evening
smiles
Miles and miles
On the solitary pastures where our sheep
Half-asleep
Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight, stray or
stop
As they crop—

II.

Was the site once of a city great and gay,
(So they say)
Of our country's very capital, its prince
Ages since
Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding
far
Peace or war.

III.

Now—the country does not even boast a tree,
As you see,

To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills
 From the hills
 Intersect and give a name to, (else they run
 Into one)

IV.

Where the domed and daring palace shot
 its spires
 Up like fires
 O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall
 Bounding all,
 Made of marble, men might march on nor
 be prest,
 Twelve abreast.

V.

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass
 Never was !
 Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'er-
 spreads
 And embeds
 Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,
 Stock or stone—

VI.

Where a multitude of men breathed joy and
 woe
 Long ago ;

378 ROBERT BROWNING.

Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread
 of shame
 Struck them tame ;
And that glory and that shame alike, the gold
 Bought and sold.

VII.

Now,—the single little turret that remains
 On the plains,
By the caper overrooted, by the gourd
 Overscored,
While the patching houseleek's head of
 blossom winks
 Through the chinks—

VIII.

Marks the basement whence a tower in
 ancient time
 Sprang sublime,
And a burning ring all round, the chariots
 traced
 As they raced
And the monarch and his minions and his
 dames
 Viewed the games.

IX.

And I know, while thus the quiet-coloured
 eve
 Smiles to leave

To their folding, all our many-tinkling fleece
 In such peace,
And the slopes and rills in undistinguished
 gray
 Melt away—

X.

That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair
 Waits me there
In the turret, whence the charioteers caught
 soul
 For the goal,
When the king looked, where she looks
 now, breathless, dumb
 Till I come.

XI.

But he looked upon the city, every side,
 Far and wide,
All the mountains topped with temples, all
 the glades'
 Colonnades,
All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts,—and
 then,
 All the men !

XII.

When I do come, she will speak not, she
 will stand,
 Either hand

On my shoulder, give her eyes the first
embrace

Of my face,
Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and
speech

Each on each.

XIII.

In one year they sent a million fighters forth
South and north.

And they built their gods' a brazen pillar
high

As the sky,
Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full
force—

Gold, or course.

XIV.

Oh, heart ! oh, blood that freezes, blood that
burns !

Earth's returns
For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin !

Shut them in,
With their triumphs and their glories and
the rest.

Love is best !

SONG.

I.

NAY but you, who do not love her,
Is she not pure gold, my mistress?
Holds earth aught—speak truth—above her?
Aught like this tress, see, and this tress,
And this last fairest tress of all,
So fair, see, ere I let it fall?

II.

Because, you spend your lives in praising;
To praise, you search the wide world
over;
So, why not witness, calmly gazing,
If earth holds aught—speak truth—above
her?
Above this tress, and this I touch
But cannot praise, I love so much!

A LOVER'S QUARREL.

I.

OH, what a dawn of day !
How the March sun feels like May !
 All is blue again
 After last night's rain,
And the South dries the hawthorn-spray.
 Only, my Love's away !
I'd as lief that the blue were gray.

II.

Runnels, which rillels swell,
Must be dancing down the dell
 With a foamy head
 On the beryl bed
Paven smooth as a hermit's cell :
 Each with a tale to tell,
Could my Love but attend as well.

III.

Dearest, three months ago !
When we lived blocked-up with snow,—
 When the wind would edge
 In and in his wedge,
In, as far as the point could go—
 Not to our ingle, though,
Where we loved each the other so !

IV.

Laughs with so little cause !
We devised games out of straws.
 We would try and trace
 One another's face
In the ash, as an artist draws ;
 Free on each other's flaws,
How we chattered like two church daws !

V.

What's in the "Times" ?—a scold
At the emperor deep and cold ;
 He has taken a bride
 To his gruesome side,
That's as fair as himself is bold :
 There they sit ermine-stoled,
And she powders her hair with gold.

VI.

Fancy the Pampas' sheen !
Miles and miles of gold and green
 Where the sun-flowers blow
 In a solid glow,
And to break now and then the screen—
 Black neck and eyeballs keen,
Up a wild horse leaps between !

VII.

Try, will our table turn ?
Lay your hands there light, and yearn

Till the yearning slips
Thro' the finger tips
In a fire which a few discern,
And a very few feel burn,
And the rest, they may live and learn !

VIII.

Then we would up and pace,
For a change, about the place,
Each with arm o'er neck.
'Tis our quarter-deck,
We are seamen in woeful case.
Help in the ocean-space !
Or, if no help, we'll embrace.

IX.

See, how she looks now, drest
In a sledging-cap and vest.
'Tis a huge fur cloak—
Like a reindeer's yoke
Falls the lappet along the breast :
Sleeves for her arms to rest,
Or to hang, as my Love likes best.

X.

Teach me to flirt a fan
As the Spanish ladies can,
Or I tint your lip
With a burn't stick's tip

And you turn into such a man !
Just the two spots that span
Half the bill of the young male swan.

XI.

Dearest, three months ago
When the mesmeriser Snow
With his hand's first sweep
Put the earth to sleep,
'Twas a time when the heart could show
All—how was earth to know,
'Neath the mute hand's to-and-fro !

XII.

Dearest, three months ago
When we loved each other so,
Lived and loved the same
Till an evening came
When a shaft from the Devil's bow
Pierced to our ingle-glow,
And the friends were friend and foe !

XIII.

Not from the heart beneath—
'Twas a bubble born of breath,
Neither sneer nor vaunt,
Nor reproach nor taunt.
See a word, how it severeth !
Oh, power of life and death
In the tongue, as the Preacher saith :

XIV.

Woman, and will you cast
For a word, quite off at last,
 Me, your own, your you,—
 Since, as Truth is true,
I was you all the happy past—
 Me do you leave aghast
With the memories we amassed ?

XV.

Love, if you knew the light,
That your soul casts in my sight,
 How I look to you
 For the pure and true,
And the beauteous and the right,—
 Bear with a moment's spite
When a mere mote threatens the white !

XVI.

What of a hasty word ?
Is the fleshly heart not stirred
 By a worm's pin-prick
 Where its roots are quick ?
See the eye, by a fly's-foot blurred
 Ear, when a straw is heard
Scratch the brain's coat of curd !

XVII.

Foul be the world or fair,
More or less, how can I care ?

'Tis the world the same
For my praise or blame,
And endurance is easy there.
Wrong in the one thing rare—
Oh, it is hard to bear !

XVIII.

Here's the spring back or close,
When the almond-blossom blows ;
We shall have the word
In that minor third
There is none but the cuckoo knows—
Heaps of the guelder-rose !
I must bear with it, I suppose.

XIX.

Could but November come,
Were the noisy birds struck dumb
At the warning slash
Of his driver's-lash—
I would laugh like the valiant Thumb
Facing the castle glum
And the giant's fee-faw-fum !

XX.

Then, were the world well stript
Of the gear wherein equipped
We can stand apart,
Heart dispense with heart

In the sun, with the flowers unnipped,—
 Oh, the world's hangings ripped,
We were both in a bare-walled crypt !

XXI.

Each in the crypt would cry
“ But one freezes here ! and why ?
 When a heart as chill
 At my own would thrill
Back to life, and its fires out-fly ?
 Heart, shall we live or die ?
The rest, . . . settle it by and by ! ”

XXII.

So, she'd efface the score,
And forgive me as before.
 Just at twelve o'clock
 I shall hear her knock
In the worst of a storm's uproar—
 I shall pull her through the door—
I shall have her for evermore !

FRA LIPPO LIPPI.

I AM poor brother Lippo, by your leave !
You need not clap your torches to my face.
Zooks, what's to blame ? you think you see a
monk !
What, it's past midnight, and you go the
rounds,
And here you catch me at an alley's end
Where sportive ladies leave their doors ajar.
The Carmine's my cloister : hunt it up,
Do,—harry out, if you must show your zeal,
Whatever rat, there, haps on his wrong
hole,
And nip each softling of a wee white mouse,
Weke, weke, that's crept to keep him com-
pany !
Aha, you know your betters ? Then, you'll
take
Your hand away that's fiddling on my
throat,
And please to know me likewise. Who am
I ?
Why, one, sir, who is lodging with a friend
Three streets off—he's a certain . . . how
d'ye call ?
Master—a . . . Cosimo of the Medici,
In the house that caps the corner. Boh !
you were best !

Remember and tell me, the day you're
hanged,

How you affected such a gullet's-gripe !

But you, sir, it concerns you that your knaves

Pick up a manner nor discredit you.

Zooks, are we pilchards, that they sweep the
streets

And count fair prize what comes into their
net ?

He's Judas to a tittle, that man is !

Just such a face ! why, sir, you make amends.

Lord ! I'm not angry ! Bid your hangdogs
go

Drink out this quarter-florin to the health

Of the munificent House that harbours me

(And many more beside, lads ! more beside !)

And all's come square again. I'd like his
face—

His, elbowing on his comrade in the door

With the pike and lantern,—for the slave
that holds

John Baptist's head a-dangle by the hair

With one hand ("look you, now," as who
should say)

And his weapon in the other, yet unwiped !

It's not your chance to have a bit of chalk,

A wood-coal or the like ? or you should see !

Yes, I'm the painter, since you style me so.

What, brother Lippo's doings, up and down,

You know them and they take you ? like
enough !

I saw the proper twinkle in your eye—
'Tell you I liked your looks at very first.
Let's sit and set things straight now, hip to
haunch.
Here's spring come, and the nights one
makes up bands
To roam the town and sing out carnival,
And I've been three weeks shut within my
mew,
A-painting for the great man, saints and
saints
And saints again. I could not paint all
night—
Ouf! I leaned out of window for fresh
air.
There came a hurry of feet and little feet,
A sweep of lute-strings, laughs, and whiffs
of song,—
Flower o' the broom,
Take away love, and our earth is a tomb!
Flower o' the quince,
I let Lisa go, and what good's in life since?
Flower o' the thyme—and so on. Round they
went.
Scarce had they turned the corner when a
titter,
Like the skipping of rabbits by moonlight—
three slim shapes—
And a face that looked up . . . zooks, sir,
flesh and blood,
That's all I'm made of! Into shreds it went,

Curtain and counterpane and coverlet,
All the bed furniture—a dozen knots,
There was a ladder! down I let myself,
Hands and feet, scrambling somehow, and
so dropped,

And after them. I came up with the fun
Hard by St. Laurence, hail fellow, well met,—
Flower o' the rose,

If I've been merry, what matter who knows?

And so as I was stealing back again
To get to bed and have a bit of sleep
Ere I rise up to-morrow and go work
On Jerome knocking at his poor old breast
With his great round stone to subdue the
flesh,

You snap me of the sudden. Ah, I see!
Though your eye twinkles still, you shake
your head—

Mine's shaved,—a monk, you say—the sting's
in that!

If Master Cosimo announced himself,
Mum's the word naturally; but a monk!
Come, what am I a beast for? tell us, now!
I was a baby when my mother died
And father died and left me in the street.
I starved there, God knows how, a year or
two

On fig-skins, melon-parings, rinds and
shucks,

Refuse and rubbish. One fine frosty day
My stomach being empty as your hat,

The wind doubled me up and down I went.
Old Aunt Lapaccia trussed me with one hand,
(Its fellow was a stinger as I knew)
And so along the wall, over the bridge,
By the straight cut to the convent. Six
words, there,
While I stood munching my first bread that
month :
“So, boy, you’re minded,” quoth the good
fat father
Wiping his own mouth, ’twas refection-
time,—
“To quit this very miserable world?
Will you renounce” . . . The mouthful of
bread? thought I ;
By no means ! Brief, they made a monk of
me ;
I did renounce the world, its pride and greed.
Palace, farm, villa, shop and banking-house,
Trash, such as these poor devils of Medici
Have given their hearts to—all at eight years
old.
Well, sir, I found in time, you may be sure,
’Twas not for nothing—the good bellyful,
The warm serge and the rope that goes all
round,
And day-long blessed idleness beside !
“Let’s see what the urchin’s fit for”—that
came next.
Not overmuch their way, I must confess.
Such a to-do ! they tried me with their books.

Lord, they'd have taught me Latin in pure
waste !

Flower o' the clove,

All the Latin I construe is, " amo " I love !

But, mind you, when a boy starves in the
streets

Eight years together, as my fortune was,
Watching folk's faces to know who will
fling

The bit of half-stripped grape-bunch he
desires,

And who will curse or kick him for his
pains—

Which gentleman processional and fine,
Holding a candle to the Sacrament,
Will wink and let him lift a plate and catch
The droppings of the wax to sell again,
Or holla for the Eight and have him
whipped,—

How say I?—nay, which dog bites, which
lets drop

His bone from the heap of offal in the
street !

—The soul and sense of him grow sharp
alike,

He learns the look of things, and none the
less

For admonitions from the hunger-pinch.

I had a store of such remarks, be sure,

Which, after I found leisure, turned to use :

I drew men's faces on my copy-books,

Scrawled them within the antiphonary's
marge,
Joined legs and arms to the long music-
notes,
Found nose and eyes and chin for A's
and B's,
And made a string of pictures of the world
Betwixt the ins and outs of verb and noun,
On the wall, the bench, the door. The
monks looked black.
"Nay," quoth the Prior, "turn him out,
d'ye say?
In no wise. Lose a crow and catch a lark.
What if at last we get our man of parts,
We Carmelites, like those Camaldolese
And Preaching Friars, to do our church up
fine
And put the front on it that ought to be!"
And hereupon they bade me daub away.
Thank you! my head being crammed, their
walls a blank,
Never was such prompt disemburdening.
First, every sort of monk, the black and
white,
I drew them, fat and lean: then folks at
church,
From good old gossips waiting to confess
Their cribs of barrel-droppings, candle-
ends,—
To the breathless fellow at the altar-foot,
Fresh from his murder, safe and sitting there

With the little children round him in a row
Of admiration, half for his beard and half
For that white anger of his victim's son
Shaking a fist at him with one fierce arm,
Signing himself with the other because of
Christ

(Whose sad face on the cross sees only this
After the passion of a thousand years)
Till some poor girl, her apron o'er her head
Which the intense eyes looked through, came
at eve

On tip-toe, said a word, dropped in a loaf,
Her pair of ear-rings and a bunch of flowers
The brute took growling, prayed, and then
was gone.

I painted all, then cried "'tis ask and have—
Choose, for more's ready!"—laid the ladder
flat,

And showed my covered bit of cloister-wall.
The monks closed in a circle and praised
loud

Till checked, (taught what to see and not to
see,

Being simple bodies) "that's the very man!
Look at the boy who stoops to pat the dog!
That woman's like the Prior's niece who
comes

To care about his asthma: it's the life!"
But there my triumph's straw-fire flared and
funked—

Their betters took their turn to see and say:

The Prior and the learned pulled a face
And stopped all that in no time. "How?
what's here?"

Quite from the mark of painting, bless us all!
Faces, arms, legs and bodies like the true
As much as pea and pea! it's devil's-game!
Your business is not to catch men with show,
With homage to the perishable clay,
But lift them over it, ignore it all,
Make them forget there's such a thing as
flesh.

Your business is to paint the souls of men—
Man's soul, and it's a fire, smoke . . . no it's
not . . .

It's vapour done up like a new-born babe—
(In that shape when you die it leaves your
mouth)

It's . . . well, what matters talking, it's the
soul!

Give us no more of body than shows soul.
Here's Giotto, with his Saint a-praising
God!

That sets you praising,—why not stop with
him?

Why put all thoughts of praise out of our
heads

With wonder at lines, colours, and what not?
Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms!
Rub all out, try at it a second time.

Oh, that white smallish female with the
breasts,

She's just my niece . . . Herodias, I would
say,—

Who went and danced and got men's heads
cut off—

Have it all out!" Now, is this sense, I ask?
A fine way to paint soul, by painting body
So ill, the eye can't stop there, must go further
And can't fare worse! Thus, yellow does
for white

When what you put for yellow's simply
black,

And any sort of meaning looks intense
When all beside itself means and looks
nought.

Why can't a painter lift each foot in turn,
Left foot and right foot, go a double step,
Make his flesh liker and his soul more like,
Both in their order? Take the prettiest face,
The Prior's niece . . . patron-saint—is it so
pretty

You can't discover if it means hope, fear,
Sorrow or joy? won't beauty go with these?
Suppose I've made her eyes all right and
blue,

Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,
And then add soul and heighten them three-
fold?

Or say there's beauty with no soul at all—
(I never saw it—put the case the same—)
If you get simple beauty and nought else,
You get about the best thing God invents,—

That's somewhat. And you'll find the soul
you have missed,
Within yourself when you return Him thanks !
" Rub all out ! " well, well, there's my life,
in short,
And so the thing has gone on ever since.
I'm grown a man no doubt, I've broken
bounds—
You should not take a fellow eight years old
And make him swear to never kiss the
girls—
I'm my own master, paint now as I please—
Having a friend, you see, in the Corner-
house !
Lord, it's fast holding by the rings in
front—
Those great rings serve more purposes than
just
To plant a flag in, or tie up a horse !
And yet the old schooling sticks—the old
grave eyes
Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work,
The heads shake still—" It's Art's decline,
my son !
You're not of the true painters, great and
old :
Brother Angelico's the man, you'll find :
Brother Lorenzo stands his single peer.
Fag on at flesh, you'll never make the
third ! "

Flower o' the pine,

*You keep your mistr . . . manners, and I'll
stick to mine!*

I'm not the third, then : bless us, they must
know !

Don't you think they're the likeliest to
know,

They, with their Latin? so I swallow my
rage,

Clench my teeth, suck my lips in tight, a y
paint A

To please them—sometimes do, and som
times don't,

For, doing most, there's pretty sure to cor

A turn—some warm eve finds me at 11
saints—

A laugh, a cry, the business of the world—

*(Flower o' the peach, **

Death for us all, and his own life for each!)

And my whole soul revolves, the cup runs
o'er,

The world and life's too big to pass for a
dream,

And I do these wild things in sheer despite,

And play the fooleries you catch me at,

In pure rage! the old mill-horse, out at
grass

After hard years, throws up his stiff heels so,

Although the miller does not preach to him

The only good of grass is to make chaff.

What would men have? Do they like
grass or no—

May they or mayn't they? all I want's the
thing

Settled for ever one way : as it is

You tell too many lies and hurt yourself.

You don't like what you only like too much,

You do like what, if given you at your
word,

You find abundantly detestable.

For me, I think I speak as I was taught—

I always see the Garden and God there

A-making man's wife — and, my lesson
learned,

The value and significance of flesh,

I can't unlearn ten minutes afterward.

You understand me : I'm a beast, I know.

But see, now—why, I see as certainly

As that the morning-star's about to shine,

What will hap some day. We've a
youngster here

Comes to our convent, studies what I do,

Slouches and stares and lets no atom drop—

His name is Guidi — he'll not mind the
monks—

They call him Hulking Tom, he lets them
talk—

He picks my practice up—he'll paint apace,

I hope so—though I never live so long,

I know what's sure to follow. You be
judge !

You speak no Latin more than I, belike—

However, you're my man, you've seen the
world

—The beauty and the wonder and the
power,

The shapes of things, their colours, lights
and shades,

Changes, surprises,—and God made it all !

—For what ? do you feel thankful, ay or no,
For this fair town's face, yonder river's
line,

The mountain round it and the sky above,
Much more the figures of man, woman,
child,

These are the frame to ? What's it all
about ?

To be passed o'er, despised ? or dwelt upon,
Wondered at ? oh, this last of course, you
say.

But why not do as well as say,—paint these
Just as they are, careless what comes of it ?
God's works—paint anyone, and count it
crime

To let a truth slip. Don't object, " His
works

Are here already—nature is complete :

Suppose you reproduce her—(which you
can't)

There's no advantage ! you must beat her,
then."

For. don't you mark, we're made so that we
love

First when we see them painted, things we
have passed

Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see ;
And so they are better, painted—better to
us,

Which is the same thing. Art was given
for that—

God uses us to help each other so,
Lending our minds out. Have you noticed,
now,

Your cullion's hanging face ? A bit of chalk,
And trust me but you should though ! How
much more,

If I drew higher things with the same truth !
That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place,
Interpret God to all of you ! oh, oh,
It makes me mad to see what men shall do
And we in our graves ! This world's no
blot for us,

Nor blank—it means intensely, and means
good :

To find its meaning in my meat and drink.

“ Ay, but you don't so instigate to prayer,”
Strikes in the Prior ! “ when your meaning's
plain

It does not say to folks—remember matins—
Or, mind you fast next Friday.” Why, for
this

What need of art at all ? A skull and bones,
Two bits of stick nailed cross-wise, or,
what's best,

A bell to chime the hour with, does as well.
I painted a St. Laurence six months since
At Prato, splashed the fresco in fine style.
“How looks my painting, now the scaffold’s
down?”

I ask a brother: “Hugely,” he returns—
“Already not one phiz of your three slaves
That turn the Deacon off his toasted side,
But’s scratched and prodded to our heart’s
content,

The pious people have so eased their own
When coming to say prayers there in a rage.
We get on fast to see the bricks beneath.
Expect another job this time next year,
For pity and religion grow i’ the crowd—
Your painting serves its purpose!” Hang
the fools!

—That is—you’ll not mistake an idle word
Spoke in a huff by a poor monk, God wot,
Tasting the air this spicy night which turns
The unaccustomed head like Chianti wine!
Oh, the church knows! don’t misreport me,
now!

It’s natural a poor monk out of bounds
Should have his apt word to excuse himself:
And hearken how I plot to make amends.
I have bethought me; I shall paint a piece
. . . There’s for you! Give me six months,
then go, see
Something in Sant’ Ambrogio’s . . . (bless
the nuns!

They want a cast of my office) I shall paint
God in the midst, Madonna and her babe,
Ringed by a bowery, flowery angel-brood,
Lilies and vestments and white faces, sweet
As puff on puff of grated orris-root
When ladies crowd to church at mid-
summer.

And then in the front, of course a saint or
two—

Saint John, because he saves the Florentines,
Saint Ambrose, who puts down in black and
white

The convent's friends and gives them a long
day,

And Job, I must have him there past mistake,
The man of Uz, (and Us without the z.

Painters who need his patience.) Well, all
these

Secured at their devotions, up shall come
Out of a corner when you least expect,
As one by a dark stair into a great light,
Music and talking, who but Lippo! I!—
Mazed, motionless and moonstruck—I'm the
man!

Back I shrink—what is this I see and hear?
I, caught up with my monk's things by
mistake,

My old serge gown and rope that goes all
round,

I, in this presence, this pure company!
Where's a hole, where's a corner for escape?

Then steps a sweet angelic slip of a thing
Forward, puts out a soft palm—"Not so
fast!"

—Addresses the celestial presence, "nay—
He made you and devised you, after all,
Though he's none of you! Could Saint
John there draw—

His camel-hair make up a painting-brush?
We come to brother Lippo for all that,
Iste perfecit opus!" So, all smile—
I shuffle sideways with my blushing face
Under the cover of a hundred wings
Thrown like a spread of kirtles when you're
gay

And play hot cockles, all the doors being shut,
Till, wholly unexpected, in there pops
The hothead husband! Thus I scuttle off
To some safe bench behind, not letting go
The palm of her, the little lily thing
That spoke the good word for me in the nick,
Like the Prior's niece . . . Saint Lucy, I
would say.

And so all's saved for me, and for the church
A pretty picture gained. Go, six months
hence!

Your hand, sir, and good-bye: no lights,
no lights!

The street's hushed, and I know my own
way back—

Don't fear me! There's the gray beginning.
Zooks!

ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND.

I.

My love, this is the bitterest, that thou
Who art all truth and who dost love me now
As thine eyes say, as thy voice breaks to
say—
Should'st love so truly and could'st love me
still
A whole long life through, had but love its
will,
Would death that leads me from thee
brook delay !

II.

I have but to be by thee, and thy hand
Would never let mine go, thy heart withstand
The beating of my heart to reach its place.
When should I look for thee and feel thee
gone ?
When cry for the old comfort and find none ?
Never, I know ! Thy soul is in thy face.

III.

Oh, I should fade—'tis willed so ! might I
save,
Gladly I would, whatever beauty gave
Joy to thy sense, for that was precious too.
It is not to be granted. But the soul

Whence the love comes, all ravage leaves
that whole ;
Vainly the flesh fades—soul makes all
things new.

IV.

And 'twould not be because my eye grew dim
Thou could'st not find the love there, thanks
to Him

Who never is dishonoured in the spark
He gave us from his fire of fires, and bade
Remember whence it sprang nor be afraid
While that burns on, though all the rest
grow dark.

V.

So, how thou would'st be perfect, white and
clean
Outside as inside, soul and soul's demesne
Alike, this body given to show it by !
Oh, three-parts through the worst of life's
abyss,
What plaudits from the next world after
this,
Could'st thou repeat a stroke and gain the
sky !

VI.

And is it not the bitterer to think
That, disengage our hands and thou wilt
sink
Although thy love was love in very deed ?

I know that nature ! Pass a festive day,
Thou dost not throw its relic-flower away
Nor bid its music's loitering echo speed.

VII.

Thou let'st the stranger's glove lie where it
fell ;
If old things remain old things all is well,
For thou art grateful as becomes man
best :
And hadst thou only heard me play one tune,
Or viewed me from a window, not so soon
With thee would such things fade as with
the rest.

VIII.

I seem to see ! we meet and part : 'tis brief :
The book I opened keeps a folded leaf,
The very chair I sat on, breaks the rank ;
That is a portrait of me on the wall—
Three lines, my face comes at so slight a
call ;
And for all this, one little hour's to thank.

IX.

But now, because the hour through years
was fixed,
Because our inmost beings met and mixed,
Because thou once hast loved me—wilt
thou dare

Say to thy soul and Who may list beside,
"Therefore she is immortally my bride,
Chance cannot change that love, nor time
impair.

X.

"So, what if in the dusk of life that's left,
I, a tired traveller, of my sun bereft,
Look from my path when, mimicking the
same,
The fire-fly glimpses past me, come and
gone?
—Where was it till the sunset? where anon
It will be at the sunrise! what's to
blame?"

XI.

Is it so helpful to thee? canst thou take
The mimic up, nor, for the true thing's sake,
Put gently by such efforts at a beam?
Is the remainder of the way so long
Thou need'st the little solace, thou the
strong?
Watch out thy watch, let weak ones doze
and dream!

XII.

"—Ah, but the fresher faces! Is it true,"
Thou'lt ask, "some eyes are beautiful and
new?
Some hair,—how can one choose but grasp
such wealth?"

And if a man would press his lips to lips
Fresh as the wilding hedge-rose-cup there
slips

The dew-drop out of, must it be by stealth ?

XIII.

"It cannot change the love kept still for Her,
Much more than, such a picture to prefer
Passing a day with, to a room's bare side.
The painted form takes nothing she
possessed,
Yet while the Titian's Venus lies at rest
A man looks. Once more, what is there
to chide?"

XIV.

So must I see, from where I sit and watch,
My own self sell myself, my hand attach
Its warrant to the very thefts from me—
Thy singleness of soul that made me proud,
Thy purity of heart I loved aloud,
Thy man's truth I was bold to bid God
see !

XV.

Love so, then, if thou wilt ! Give all thou
canst
Away to the new faces—disentranced—
(Say it and think it) obdurate no more,
Re-issue looks and words from the old mint—
Pass them afresh, no matter whose the print
Image and superscription once they bore !

XVI.

Re-coin thyself and give it them to spend,—
It all comes to the same thing at the end,
 Since mine thou wast, mine art, and mine
 shalt be,
Faithful or faithless, sealing up the sum
Or lavish of my treasure, thou must come
 Back to the heart's place here I keep for
 thee !

XVII.

Only, why should it be with stain at all ?
Why must I, 'twixt the leaves of coronal,
 Put any kiss of pardon on thy brow ?
Why need the other women know so much
And talk together, " Such the look and such
 The smile he used to love with, then as
 now ! "

XVIII.

Might I die last and shew thee ! Should
 I find
Such hardship in the few years left behind,
 If free to take and light my lamp, and go
Into thy tomb, and shut the door and sit
Seeing thy face on those four sides of it
 The better that they are so blank, I know !

XIX.

Why, time was what I wanted, to turn o'er
Within my mind each look, get more and
 more

By heart each word, too much to learn at
 first,
 And join thee all the fitter for the pause
 'Neath the low doorway's lintel. That were
 cause
 For lingering, though thou calledst, if I
 durst !

XX.

And yet thou art the nobler of us two.
 What dare I dream of, that thou canst not
 do,
 Outstripping my ten small steps with one
 stride?
 I'll say then, here's a trial and a task—
 Is it to bear?—if easy, I'll not ask—
 Though love fail, I can trust on in thy
 pride.

XXI.

Pride?—when those eyes forestal the life
 behind
 The death I have to go through!—when I
 find,
 Now that I want thy help most, all of thee !
 What did I fear? Thy love shall hold me
 fast
 Until the little minute's sleep is past
 And I wake saved.—And yet, it will not
 be !

A SERENADE AT THE VILLA.

I.

THAT was I, you heard last night
When there rose no moon at all,
Nor, to pierce the strained and tight
Tent of heaven, a planet small :
Life was dead, and so was light.

II.

Not a twinkle from the fly,
Not a glimmer from the worm.
When the crickets stopped their cry,
When the owls forbore a term,
You heard music ; that was I.

III.

Earth turned in her sleep with pain,
Sultrily suspired for proof :
In at heaven and out again,
Lightning !—where it broke the roof,
Bloodlike, some few drops of rain.

IV.

What they could my words expressed,
O my love, my all, my one !

Singing helped the verses best,
And when singing's best was done,
To my lute I left the rest.

V.

So wore night ; the east was gray,
White the broad-faced hemlock flowers ;
Soon would come another day ;
Ere its first of heavy hours
Found me, I had past away.

VI.

What became of all the hopes,
Words and song and lute as well ?
Say, this struck you—" When life gropes
Feebly for the path where fell
Light last on the evening slopes.

VII.

" One friend in that path shall be
To secure my steps from wrong ;
One to count night day for me,
Patient through the watches long,
Serving most with none to see."

VIII.

Never say—as something bodes—
" So the worst has yet a worse !
When life halts 'neath double loads,
Better the task-master's curse
Than such music on the roads !

IX.

“ When no moon succeeds the sun,
Nor can pierce the midnight's tent
Any star, the smallest one,
While some drops, where lightning went,
Show the final storm begun—

X.

“ When the fire-fly hides its spot,
When the garden-voices fail
In the darkness thick and hot,—
Shall another voice avail,
That shape be where those are not?

XI.

“ Has some plague a longer lease
Proffering its help uncouth?
Can't one even die in peace?
As one shuts one's eyes on youth,
Is that face the last one sees? ”

XII.

Oh, how dark your villa was,
Windows fast and obdurate!
How the garden grudged me grass
Where I stood—the iron gate
Ground its teeth to let me pass!



R B

Page 421

"From street to street he piped advancing,
And step 'or step they followed dancing."

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN.

A CHILD'S STORY.

(WRITTEN FOR, AND INSCRIBED TO, W. M. THE
YOUNGER)

I.

HAMELIN Town's in Brunswick,
By famous Hanover city ;
The river Weser, deep and wide,
Washes its wall on the southern side ;
A pleasanter spot you never spied ;
But, when begins my ditty,
Almost five hundred years ago,
To see the townsfolk suffer so
From vermin, was a pity.

II.

Rats !
They fought the dogs, and killed the cats,
And bit the babies in the cradles,
And ate the cheeses out of the vats,
And licked the soup from the cook's own
ladles,
Split open the kegs of salted sprats,
Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,
And even spoiled the women's chats,
By drowning their speaking
With shrieking and squeaking
In fifty different sharps and flats.

III.

At last the people in a body
To the Town Hall came flocking :
“ ’Tis clear,” cried they, “ our Mayor’s a
noddly ;
“ And as for our Corporation—shocking
“ To think we buy new gowns lined with
ermine
“ For dolts that can’t or won’t determine
“ What’s best to rid us of our vermin !
“ You hope, because you’re old and obese,
“ To find in the furry civic robe ease ?
“ Rouse up, Sirs ! Give your brains a
racking
“ To find the remedy we’re lacking,
“ Or, sure as fate, we’ll send you packing ! ”
At this the Mayor and Corporation
Quaked with mighty consternation.

IV.

An hour they sate in council,
At length the Mayor broke silence
“ For a guilder I’d my ermine gown sell ;
“ I wish I were a mile hence !
“ It’s easy to bid one rack one’s brain—
“ I’m sure my poor head aches again
“ I’ve scratched it so, and all in vain.
“ Oh for a trap, a trap, a trap ! ”
Just as he said this, what should hap
At the chamber door but a gentle tap ?

"Bless us," cried the Mayor, "what's that?"
(With the Corporation as he sat,
Looking little though wondrous fat;
Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister
Than a too-long-opened oyster,
Save when at noon his paunch grew mutinous
For a plate of turtle green and glutinous)
"Only a scraping of shoes on the mat?"
"Anything like the sound of a rat
"Makes my heart go pit-a-pat!"

v.

"Come in!"—the Mayor cried, looking
bigger:
And in did come the strangest figure!
His queer long coat from heel to head
Was half of yellow and half of red;
And he himself was tall and thin,
With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin,
And light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,
No tuft on cheek nor beard on chin,
But lips where smiles went out and in—
There was no guessing his kith and kin!
And nobody could enough admire
The tall man and his quaint attire:
Quoth one: "It's as my great-grandsire,
"Starting up the Trump of Doom's tone,
"Had walked this way from his painted
tombstone!"

VI.

He advanced to the council-table :
And, "Please your honours," said he, "I'm
able,
"By means of a secret charm, to draw
"All creatures living beneath the sun,
"That creep, or swim, or fly, or run,
"After me so as you never saw !
"And I chiefly use my charm
"On creatures that do people harm,
"The mole, and toad, and newt, and viper ;
"And people call me the Pied Piper."
(And here they noticed round his neck
A scarf of red and yellow stripe,
To match with his coat of the selfsame
cheque ;
And at the scarf's end hung a pipe ;
And his fingers, they noticed, were ever
straying
As if impatient to be playing
Upon this pipe, as low it dangled
Over his vesture so old-fangled.)
"Yet," said he, "poor piper as I am,
"In Tartary I freed the Cham,
"Last June, from his huge swarms of gnats ;
"I eased in Asia the Nizam
"Of a monstrous brood of vampyre-bats :
"And, as for what your brain bewilders,
"If I can rid your town of rats
"Will you give me a thousand guilders ?"

“One? fifty thousand!”—was the exclamation
Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.

VII.

Into the street the Piper stept,
Smiling first a little smile,
As if he knew what magic slept
In his quiet pipe the while ;
Then, like a musical adept,
To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,
And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled
Like a candle flame where salt is sprinkled ;
And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,
You heard as if an army muttered ;
And the muttering grew to a grumbling ;
And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling ;
And out of the houses the rats came
tumbling.

Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,
Brown rats, black rats, gray rats, tawny rats,
Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,

Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,
Cocking tales and pricking whiskers,

Families by tens and dozens,
Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives—
Followed the Piper for their lives.

From street to street he piped advancing,
And step for step they followed dancing,
Until they came to the river Weser
Wherein all plunged and perished

—Save one who, stout as Julius Cæsar,
Swam across and lived to carry
(As he the manuscript he cherished)
To Rat-land home his commentary,
Which was, “At the first shrill notes of the
pipe,
“I heard the sound as of scraping tripe,
“And putting apples, wondrous ripe,
“Into a cider-press’s gripe :
“And a moving away of pickle-tub-boards,
“And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards,
“And a drawing the corks of train-oil-flasks,
“And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks ;
“And it seemed as if a voice
“(Sweeter far than by harp or by psaltery
“Is breathed) called out, Oh rats, rejoice !
“The world is grown to one vast drysaltery !
“So munch on, crunch on, take your
nuncheon,
“Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon !
“And just as a bulky sugar-puncheon,
“All ready staved, like a great sun shone
“Glorious scarce an inch before me,
“Just as methought it said, Come, bore me !
“—I found the Weser rolling o’er me.”

VIII.

You should have heard the Hamelin people
Ringing the bells till they rocked the steeple ;
“Go,” cried the Mayor, “and get long poles !
“Poke out the nests and block up the holes !

“Consult with carpenters and builders,
“And leave in our town not even a trace
“Of the rats !”—when suddenly up the face
Of the Piper perked in the market-place,
With a, “First, if you please, my thousand
guilders !”

IX.

A thousand guilders ! The Mayor looked
blue ;
So did the Corporation too.
For council dinners made rare havock
With Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave, Hock ;
And half the money would replenish
Their cellar’s biggest butt with Rhenish.
To pay this sum to a wandering fellow
With a gipsy coat of red and yellow !
“Beside,” quoth the Mayor with a knowing
wink,
“Our business was done at the river’s brink ;
“We saw with our eyes the vermin sink,
“And what’s dead can’t come to life, I think,
“So, friend, we’re not the folk’s to shrink
“From the duty of giving you something
for drink,
“And a matter of money to put in your poke ;
“But, as for the guilders, what we spoke
“Of them, as you very well know, was in
joke.
“Beside, our losses have made us thrifty ;
“A thousand guilders ! Come, take fifty !”

X.

The piper's face fell, and he cried,
"No trifling! I can't wait, beside!
"I've promised to visit by dinner time
"Bagdat, and accept the prime
"Of the Head Cook's pottage, all he's rich in,
"For having left, in the Caliph's kitchen,
"Of a nest of scorpions no survivor—
"With him I proved no bargain-driver,
"With you, don't think I'll bate a stiver!
"And folks who put me in a passion
"May find me pipe to another fashion."

XI.

"How?" cried the Mayor, "d'ye think I'll
brook
"Being worse treated than a Cook?
"Insulted by a lazy ribald
"With idle pipe and vesture piebald?
"You threaten us, fellow! Do your worst,
"Blow your pipe there till you burst!"

XII.

Once more he stept in to the street;
And to his lips again
Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane;
And ere he blew three notes (such sweet
Soft notes as yet musician's cunning
Never gave the enraptured air)

There was a rustling, that seemed like a
bustling
Of merry crowds justling at pitching and
hustling,
Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes
clattering,
Little hands clapping, and little tongues
chattering,
And, like fowls in a farm-yard when barley
is scattering,
Out came the children running.
All the little boys and girls,
With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,
And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls,
Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after
The wonderful music with shouting and
laughter.

XIII.

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood
As if they were changed into blocks of wood,
Unable to move a step, or cry
To the children merrily skipping by—
And could only follow with the eye
That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.
But how the Mayor was on the rack,
And the wretched Council's bosoms beat,
As the Piper turned from the High Street
To where the Weser rolled its waters
Right in the way of their sons and
daughters!

However he turned from South to West,
And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed,
And after him the children pressed ;
Great was the joy in every breast.

“ He never can cross that mighty top !

“ He’s forced to let the piping drop,

“ And we shall see our children stop ! ”

When, lo, as they reached the mountain’s
side,

A wondrous portal opened wide,

As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed ;

And the Piper advanced and the children
followed,

And when all were in to the very last,

The door in the mountain side shut fast.

Did I say, all ? No ! One was lame,

And could not dance the whole of the way ;

And in after years, if you would blame

His sadness, he was used to say,—

“ It’s dull in our town since my playmates
left !

“ I can’t forget that I’m bereft

“ Of all the pleasant sights they see,

“ Which the Piper also promised me ;

“ For he led us, he said, to a joyous land,

“ Joining the town and just at hand,

“ Where waters gushed and fruit-trees grew,

“ And flowers put forth a fairer hue,

“ And everything was strange and new ;

“ The sparrows were brighter than peacocks
here,

"And their dogs outran our fallow deer,
"And honey-bees had lost their stings,
"And horses were born with eagles' wings;
"And just as I became assured
"My lame foot would be speedily cured,
"The music stopped and I stood still,
"And found myself outside the Hill,
"Left alone against my will,
"To go now limping as before,
"And never hear of that country more!"

XIV.

Alas, alas for Hamelin!

There came into many a burgher's pate
A text which says, that Heaven's Gate
Opes to the Rich at as easy a rate
As the needle's eye takes a camel in!
The Mayor sent East, West, North, and
South
To offer the Piper by word of mouth,
Wherever it was men's lot to find him,
Silver and gold to his heart's content,
If he'd only return the way he went,
And bring the children behind him.
But when they saw 'twas a lost endeavour,
And Piper and dancers were gone for ever,
They made a decree that lawyers never
Should think their records dated duly
If, after the day of the month and year,
These words did not as well appear,
"And so long after what happened here"

“On the Twenty-second of Júlý,
“Thirteen hundred and Seventy-six :”
And the better in memory to fix
The place of the Children’s last retreat,
They called it, the Pied Piper’s Street—
Where any one playing on pipe or tabor
Was sure for the future to lose his labour.
Nor suffered they Hostelry or Tavern
To shock with mirth a street so solemn ;
But opposite the place of the cavern
They wrote the story on a columñ,
And on the Great Church Window painted
The same, to make the world acquainted
How their children were stolen away ;
And there it stands to this very day.
And I must not omit to say
That in Transylvania there’s a tribe
Of alien people that ascribe
The outlandish ways and dress
On which their neighbours lay such stress,
To their fathers and mothers having risen
Out of some subterranean prison
Into which they were trepanned
Long time ago in a mighty band
Out of Hamelin town is Brunswick land,
But how or why, they don’t understand.

xv.

So, Willy, let you and me be wipers
Of scores out with all men—especially pipers :

And, whether they pipe us free, fróm rats
or from mice,
If we've promised them aught, let us keep
our promise.

A PRETTY WOMAN.

I.

· THAT fawn-skin-dappled hair of hers,
And the blue eye
Dear and dewy,
And that infantine fresh air of hers !

II.

To think men cannot take you, Sweet,
And enfold you,
Ay, and hold you,
And so keep you what they make you,
Sweet !

III.

You like us for a glance, you know—
For a word's sake,
Or a sword's sake,
All's the same, whate'er the chance, you
know.

IV.

And in turn we make you ours, we say—
 You and youth too,
 Eyes and mouth too,
All the face composed of flowers, we say.

V.

All's our own, to make the most of, Sweet—
 Sing and say for,
 Watch and pray for,
Keep a secret or go boast of, Sweet.

VI.

But for loving, why, you would not, Sweet,
 Though we prayed you,
 Paid you, brayed you
In a mortar—for you could not, Sweet.

VII.

So, we leave the sweet face fondly there—
 Be its beauty
 Its sole duty!
Let all hope of grace beyond, lie there!

VIII.

And while the face lies quiet there,
 Who shall wonder
 That I ponder
A conclusion? I will try it there.

IX.

As,—why must one, for the love forgone,
Scout mere liking?
Thunder-striking
Earth,—the heaven, we looked above for,
gone!

X.

Why with beauty, needs there money be—
Love with liking?
Crush the fly-king
In his gauze, because no honey bee?

XI.

May not liking be so simple-sweet,
If love grew there
'Twould undo there
All that breaks the cheek to dimples sweet?

XII.

Is the creature too imperfect, say?
Would you mend it
And so end it?
Since not all addition perfects aye!

XIII.

Or is it of its kind, perhaps,
Just perfection—
Whence, rejection
Of a grace not to its mind, perhaps?

XIV.

Shall we burn up, tread that face at once
 Into tinder,
 And so hinder
Sparks from kindling all the place at once?

XV.

Or else kiss away one's soul on her?
 Your love-fancies!—
 A sick man sees
Truer, when his hot eyes roll on her!

XVI.

Thus the craftsman thinks to grace the
 rose,—
 Plucks a mould-flower
 For his gold flower,
Uses fine things that efface the rose.

XVII.

Rosy rubies make its cup more rose,
 Precious metals
 Ape the petals,—
Last, some old king locks it up, morose!

XVIII.

Then, how grace a rose? I know a way!
 Leave it rather.
 Must you gather?
Smell, kiss, wear it—at last, throw away!

A LIGHT WOMAN.

I.

So far as our story approaches the end,
Which do you pity the most of us three?—
My friend, or the mistress of my friend
With her wanton eyes, or me?

II.

My friend was already too good to lose,
And seemed in the way of improvement
yet,
When she crossed his path with her hunting-
noose
And over him drew her net.

III.

When I saw him tangled in her toils,
A shame, said I, if she adds just him
To her nine-and-ninety other spoils,
The hundredth, for a whim!

IV.

And before my friend be wholly hers,
How easy to prove to him, I said,
An eagle's the game her pride prefers,
Though she snaps at the wren instead!

V.

So I gave her eyes my own eyes to take,
My hand sought hers as in earnest need,
And round she turned for my noble sake,
And gave me herself indeed.

VI.

The eagle am I, with my fame in the world,
The wren is he, with his maiden face.
—You look away and your lip is curled?
Patience, a moment's space!

VII.

For see—my friend goes shaking and white;
He eyes me as the basilisk:
I have turned, it appears, his day to night,
Eclipsing his sun's disc.

VIII.

And I did it, he thinks, as a very thief:
“Though I love her—that he comprehends—
One should master one's passions, (love, in chief)
And be loyal to one's friends!”

IX.

And she,—she lies in my hand as tame
As a pear hung basking over a wall;

Just a touch to try and off it came ;
'Tis mine,—can I let it fall ?

X.

With no mind to eat it, that's the worst !
Were it thrown in the road, would the
case assist ?
'Twas quenching a dozen blue-flies' thirst
When I gave its stalk a twist.

XI.

And I,—what I seem to my friend, you see—
What I soon shall seem to his love, you
guess.
What I seem to myself, do you ask of me ?
No hero, I confess.

XII.

'Tis an awkward thing to play with souls,
And matter enough to save one's own.
Yet think of my friend, and the burning coals
He played with for bits of stone !

XIII.

One likes to show the truth for the truth ;
That the woman was light is very true :
But suppose she says,—never mind that
youth—
What wrong have I done to you ?

XIV.

Well, any how, here the story stays,
So far at least as I understand ;
And, Robert Browning, you writer of plays,
Here's a subject made to your hand !

LOVE IN A LIFE.

I.

Room after room,
I hunt the house through
We inhabit together.
Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt
find her,
Next time, herself !—not the trouble behind
her
Left in the curtain, the couch's perfume !
As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath
blossomed anew,—
Yon looking-glass gleamed at the wave of
her feather.

II.

Yet the day wears,
And door succeeds door ;
I try the fresh fortune—
Range the wide house from the wing to the
centre.
Still the same chance ! she goes out as I
enter.

Spend my whole day in the quest,—who
cares?
But 'tis twilight, you see,—with such suites
to explore.
Such closets to search, such alcoves to
importune!

LIFE IN A LOVE.

ESCAPE me?
Never—
Beloved!

While I am I, and you are you,
So long as the world contains us both,
Me the loving and you the loth,
While the one eludes, must the other pursue.
My life is a fault at last, I fear—
It seems too much like a fate, indeed!
Though I do my best I shall scarce
succeed—
But what if I fail of my purpose here?

It is but to keep the nerves at strain,
To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,
And baffled, get up to begin again,—
So the chace takes up one's life, that's all.
While, look but once from your farthest
bound,
At me so deep in the dust and dark,

No sooner the old hope drops to ground
Than a new one, straight to the selfsame
mark,
I shape me—
Ever
Removed !

THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER.

I.

I SAID—Then, dearest, since 'tis so,
Since now at length my fate I know,
Since nothing all my love avails,
Since all my life seemed meant for, fails,
Since this was written and needs must be—
My whole heart rises up to bless
Your name in pride and thankfulness !
Take back the hope you gave,—I claim
Only a memory of the same,
—And this beside, if you will not blame,
Your leave for one more last ride with me.

II.

My mistress bent that brow of hers,
Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs
When pity would be softening through,
Fixed me a breathing-while or two
With life or death in the balance—Right !

The blood replenished me again :
My last thought was at least not vain.
I and my mistress, side by side
Shall be together, breathe and ride,
So one day more am I deified.

Who knows but the world may end to-
night?

III.

Hush ! if you saw some western cloud
All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed
By many benedictions—sun's
And moon's and evening-star's at once—

And so, you, looking and loving best,
Conscious grew, your passion drew
Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too
Down on you, near and yet more near,
Till flesh must fade for heaven was here !—
Thus leant she and lingered—joy and fear !

Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

IV.

Then we began to ride. My soul
Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped scroll
Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
Past hopes already lay behind.

What need to strive with a life awry ?
Had I said that, had I done this,
So might I gain, so might I miss.
Might she have loved me ? just as well
She might have hated,—who can tell ?

Where had I been now if the worst befell ?
And here we are riding, she and I.

V.

Fail I alone, in words and deeds ?
Why, all men strive, and who succeeds ?
We rode ; it seemed my spirit flew,
Saw other regions, cities new,
As the world rushed by on either side.
I thought, 'All labour, yet no less'
Bear up beneath their unsuccess.
Look at the end of work, contrast
The petty Done, the Undone vast,
This present of theirs with the hopeful
past !
I hoped she would love me. Here we
ride.

VI.

What hand and brain went ever paired ?
What heart alike conceived and dared ?
What act proved all its thought had been ?
What will but felt the fleshly screen ?
We ride and I see her bosom heave.
There's many a crown for who can reach.
Ten lines, a statesman's life in each !
The flag stuck on a heap of bones,
A soldier's doing ! what atones ?
They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones.
My riding is better, by their leave.

VII.

What does it all mean, poet? well,
Your brain's beat into rhythm—you tell
What we felt only; you expressed
You hold things beautiful the best,
And pace them in rhyme so, side by side.
'Tis something, nay 'tis much—but then,
Have you yourself what's best for men?
Are you—poor, sick, old ere your time—
Nearer one whit your own sublime
Than we who never have turned a rhyme?
Sing, riding's a joy! For me, I ride.

VIII.

And you, great sculptor—so you gave
A score of years to art, her slave,
And that's your Venus—whence we turn
To yonder girl that fords the burn!
You acquiesce and shall I repine?
What, man of music, you, grown gray
With notes and nothing else to say,
Is this your sole praise from a friend,
“Greatly his opera's strains intend,
“But in music we know how fashions end!”
I gave my youth—but we ride, in fine.

IX.

Who knows what's fit for us? Had fate
Proposed bliss here should sublimate

My being ; had I signed the bond—
Still one must lead some life beyond,
—Have a bliss to die with, dim-described.
This foot once planted on the goal,
This glory-garland round my soul,
Could I descry such? Try and test !
I sink back shuddering from the quest—
Earth being so good, would Heaven seem
best ?
Now, Heaven and she are, beyond this
ride.

X.

And yet—she has not spoke so long !
What if Heaven be that, fair and strong
At life's best, with our eyes upturned
Whither life's flower is first discerned,
We, fixed so, ever should so abide ?
What if we still ride on, we two,
With life for ever old yet new,
Changed not in kind but in degree,
The instant made eternity,—
And Heaven just prove that I and she
Ride, ride together, for ever ride ?

THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL.

A PICTURE OF FANO.

I.

DEAR and great Angel, wouldst thou only leave
That child, when thou hast done with him,
for me !

Let me sit all the day here, that when eve
Shall find performed thy special ministry
And time come for departure, thou, suspending
Thy flight, mayst see another child for tending,
Another still, to quiet and retrieve.

II.

Then I shall feel thee step one step, no more,
From where thou standest now, to where
I gaze,
And suddenly my head be covered o'er
With those wings, white above the child
who prays
Now on that tomb—and I shall feel thee
guarding
Me, out of all the world ; for me, discarding
Yon heaven thy home, that waits and opes
its door !

III.

I would not look up thither past thy head
Because the door opes, like that child, I
know,

For I should have thy gracious face instead,
Thou bird of God ! And wilt thou bend
me low
Like him, and lay, like his, my hands
together,
And lift them up to pray, and gently tether
Me, as thy lamb there, with thy garments
spread ?

IV.

If this was ever granted, I would rest
My head beneath thine, while thy healing
hands
Close-covered both my eyes beside thy breast,
Pressing the brain, which too much thought
expands,
Back to its proper size again, and smoothing
Distortion down till every nerve had soothing,
And all lay quiet, happy and supprest.

V.

How soon all worldly wrong would be
repaired !
I think how I should view the earth and
skies
And sea, when once again my brow was bared
After thy healing, with such different eyes.
O world, as God has made it ! love is beauty :
And knowing this, is love, and love is duty.
What further may be sought for or
declared ?

VI.

Guercino drew this angel I saw teach
 (Alfred, dear friend) that little child to pray,
Holding the little hands up, each to each
 Pressed gently,—with his own head turned
 away
Over the earth where so much lay before
 him
Of work to do, though heaven was opening
 o'er him,
And he was left at Fano by the beach.

VII.

We were at Fano, and three times we went
 To sit and see him in his chapel there.
And drink his beauty to our soul's content
 —My angel with me too : and since I care
For dear Guercino's fame (to which in power
And glory comes this picture for a dower,
 Fraught with a pathos so magnificent).

VIII.

And since he did not work so earnestly
 At all times, and has else endured some
 wrong,—
I took one thought his picture struck from
 me,
And spread it out, translating it to song.

My Love is here. Where are you, dear old friend ?

How rolls the Wairoa at your world's far end ?
This is Ancona, yonder is the sea.

“HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD
NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX.”

[16—.]

I.

I SPRANG to the stirrup, and Joris, and he ;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all
three ;

“Good speed !” cried the watch, as the gate-
bolts undrew ;

“Speed !” echoed the wall to us gallop-
ing through ;

Behind shut the postern, the lights sank
to rest,

And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

II.

Not a word to each other ; we kept the
great pace

Neck by neck, stride by stride, never
changing our place ;

I turned in my saddle and made its girths
tight,

Then shortened each stirrup, and set the
 pique right,
 Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker
 the bit,
 Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

III.

'Twas moonset at starting; but while we
 drew near
 Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned
 clear;
 At Boom, a great yellow star came out
 to see;
 At Duffeld, 'twas morning as plain as
 could be;
 And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard
 the half-chime,
 So Joris broke silence with, "Yet there
 is time!"

IV.

At Aerschot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,
 And against him the cattle stood black
 every one,
 To stare thro' the mist at us galloping
 past,
 And I saw my stout galloper Roland at
 last,
 With resolute shoulders, each butting away
 The haze, as some bluff river headland its
 spray.

v.

And his low head and crest, just one sharp
ear bent back
For my voice, and the other pricked out
on his track ;
And one eye's black intelligence,—ever that
glance
O'er its white edge at me, his own master,
askance !
And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye
and anon
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on.

vi.

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned ; and cried Joris,
“ Stay spur !
“ Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's
not in her,
“ We'll remember at Aix ”—for one heard
the quick wheeze
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and
staggering knees,
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the
flank,
As down on her haunches she shuddered
and sank.

vii.

So we were left galloping, Joris and I,
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in
the sky ;



R B

Page 449

“ . . . and all in a moment his roan
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone.”

The broad sun above laughed a pitiless
 laugh,
 'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright
 stubble like chaff ;
 Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang
 white,
 And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is
 in sight !"

VIII.

"How they'll greet us !"—and all in a
 moment his roan
 Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a
 stone ;
 And there was my Roland to bear the whole
 weight
 Of the news which alone could save Aix
 from her fate,
 With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the
 brim,
 And with circles of red for his eye-sockets'
 rim.

IX.

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster
 let fall,
 Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and
 all,
 Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,
 Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse
 without peer ;

Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any
noise, bad or good,
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and
stood.

x.

And all I remember is, friends flocking round
As I sate with his head 'twixt my knees on
the ground,
And no voice but was praising this Roland of
mine,
As I poured down his throat our last measure
of wine,
Which (the burgesses voted by common
consent)
Was no more than his due who brought good
news from Ghent.

A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S.

I.

OH, Galuppi, Baldassarò, this is very sad to
find !
I can hardly misconceive you ; it would
prove me deaf and blind ;
But although I give you credit, 'tis with
such a heavy mind !

II.

Here you come with your old music, and
here's all the good it brings.
What, they lived once thus at Venice, where
the merchants were the kings,
Where St. Mark's is, where the Doges used
to wed the sea with rings?

III.

Ay, because the sea's the street there; and
'tis arched by . . . what you call
. . . Shylock's bridge with houses on it,
where they kept the carnival!
I was never out of England—it's as if I saw
it all!

IV.

Did young people take their pleasure when
the sea was warm in May?
Balls and masks begun at midnight, burning
ever to mid-day,
When they made up fresh adventures for the
morrow, do you say?

V.

Was a lady such a lady, cheeks so round
and lips so red,—
On her neck the small face buoyant, like a
bell-flower on its bed,
O'er the breast's superb abundance where a
man might base his head?

VI.

Well (and it was graceful of them) they'd
break talk off and afford
—She, to bite her mask's black velvet, he to
finger on his sword,
While you sat and played Toccatas, stately
at the clavichord?

VII.

What? Those lesser thirds so plaintive,
sixths diminished sigh on sigh,
Told them something? Those suspensions,
those solutions—"Must we die?"
Those commiserating sevenths—"Life might
last! we can but try!"

VIII.

"Were you happy?"—"Yes."—"And are
you still as happy?"—"Yes—and you?"
—"Then more kisses"—"Did *I* stop them,
when a million seemed so few?"
Hark—the dominant's persistence, till it
must be answered to!

IX.

So an octave struck the answer. Oh, they
praised you, I dare say!
"Brave Galuppi! that was music! good
alike at grave and gay!
I can always leave off talking, when I hear
a master play."

X.

Then they left you for their pleasure : till in
due time, one by one,
Some with lives that came to nothing, some
with deeds as well undone,
Death came tacitly and took them where
they never see the sun.

XI.

But when I sit down to reason,—think to
take my stand nor swerve
Till I triumph o'er a secret wrung from
nature's close reserve,
In you come with your cold music, till I
creep thro' every nerve.

XII.

Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket. creaking
where a house was burned—
“Dust and ashes, dead and done with,
Venice spent what Venice earned !
The soul, doubtless, is immortal—where a
soul can be discerned

XIII.

“Yours for instance, you know physics,
something of geology,
Mathematics are your pastime ; souls shall
rise in their degree ;
Butterflies may dread extinction,—you'll not
die, it cannot be !

XIV.

“As for Venice and its people, merely born
to bloom and drop,
Here on earth they bore their fruitage, mirth
and folly were the crop,
What of soul was left, I wonder, when the
kissing had to stop?

XV.

“Dust and ashes!” So you creak it, and
I want the heart to scold.”
Dear dead women, with such hair, too—
what’s become of all the gold
Used to hang and brush their bosoms?
feel chilly and grown old.

MEMORABILIA.

I.

AH, did you once see Shelley plain,
And did he stop and speak to you?
And did you speak to him again?
How strange it seems, and new!

II.

But you were living before that,
And you are living after,
And the memory I started at—
My starting moves your laughter.

III.

I crossed a moor with a name of its own
And a use in the world no doubt,
Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone
'Mid the blank miles round about—

IV.

For there I picked up on the heather
And there I put inside my breast
A moulted feather, an eagle-feather—
Well, I forget the rest.

ANDREA DEL SARTO.

(CALLED "THE FAULTLESS PAINTER.")

BUT do not let us quarrel any more,
No, my Lucrezia ; bear with me for once :
Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.
You turn your face, but does it bring your
heart ?
I'll work then for your friend's friend, never
fear,
Treat his own subject after his own way,
Fix his own time, accept too his own price,
And shut the money into this small hand
When next it takes mine. Will it?
tenderly ?
Oh, I'll content him,—but to-morrow, Love !

I often am much wearier than you think,
This evening more than usual, and it seems
As if—forgive now—should you let me sit
Here by the window with your hand in
mine

And look a half hour forth on Fiesole,
Both of one mind, as married people use,
Quietly, quietly, the evening through,
I might get up to-morrow to my work
Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.
To-morrow how you shall be glad for this !
Your soft hand is a woman of itself,
And mine the man's bared breast she curls
inside.

Don't count the time lost, either ; you must
serve

For each of the five pictures we require—
It saves a model. So ! keep looking so—
My serpentining beauty, rounds on rounds !
—How could you ever prick those perfect
ears,

Even to put the pearl there ! oh, so sweet—
My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,
Which everybody looks on and calls his,
And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,
While she looks—no one's : very dear, no
less !

You smile ? why, there's my picture ready
made.

There's what we painters call our harmony !
A common grayness silvers everything,—

All in a twilight, you and I alike
—You, at the point of your first pride in me
(That's gone you know), but I, at every
point ;
My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned
down
To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole.
There's the bell clinking from the chapel-
top ;
That length of convent-wall across the way
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside ;
The last monk leaves the garden ; days
decrease
And autumn grows, autumn in everything.
Eh? the whole seems to fall into a shape
As if I saw alike my work and self
And all that I was born to be and do,
A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's
hand.
How strange now, looks the life he makes
us lead !
So free we seem, so fettered fast we are :
I feel he laid the fether : let it lie !
This chamber for example—turn your head—
All that's behind us ! you don't understand
Nor care to understand about my art.
But you can hear at least when people
speak ;
And that cartoon, the second from the door
—It is the thing, Love ! so such things
should be—

Behold Madonna, I am bold to say.
I can do with my pencil what I know,
What I see, what at bottom of my heart
I wish for, if I ever wish so deep—
Do easily, too—when I say perfectly
I do not boast, perhaps: yourself are
judge
Who listened to the Legate's talk last week,
And just as much they used to say in France.
At any rate 'tis easy, all of it!
No sketches first, no studies, that's long
past—
I do what many dream of all their lives—
—Dream? strive to do, and agonise to do,
And fail in doing. I could count twenty
such
On twice your fingers, and not leave this
town,
Who strive—you don't know how the others
strive
To paint a little thing like that you smeared
Carelessly passing with your robes afloat,
Yet do much less, so much less, some one
says,
(I know his name, no matter) so much less!
Well, less is more, Lucrezia! I am judged.
There burns a truer light of God in them,
In their vexed, beating, stuffed and stopped-
up brain,
Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to
prompt

This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand
of mine.

Their works drop groundward, but them-
selves, I know,

Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to
me,

Enter and take their place there sure enough,
Though they come back and cannot tell the
world.

My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.
The sudden blood of these men ! at a word—
Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils
too.

I, painting from myself and to myself,
Know what I do, am unmoved by men's
blame

Or their praise either. Somebody remarks
Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,
His hue mistaken—what of that ? or else,
Rightly traced and well ordered—what of
that ?

Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his
grasp,

Or what's a Heaven for ? all is silver-gray
Placid and perfect with my art—the worst !
I know both what I want and what might
gain—

And yet how profitless to know, to sigh
“ Had I been two, another and myself,
Our head would have o'erlooked the world ! ”
No doubt.

Yonder's a work, now, of that famous youth
The Urbinate who died five years ago.

('Tis copied, George Vasari sent it me.)

Well, I can fancy how he did it all;

Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to
see,

Reaching, that Heaven might so replenish
him,

Above and through his art—for it gives
way;

That arm is wrongly put—and there again—

A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,

Its body, so to speak! its soul is right,

He means right—that, a child may under-
stand.

Still, what an arm! and I could alter it.

But all the play, the insight and the stretch—

Out of me! out of me! And wherefore
out?

Had you enjoined them on me, given me
soul,

We might have risen to Rafael, I and you.

Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I
think—

More than I merit, yes, by many times.

But had you—oh, with the same perfect
brow,

And perfect eyes, and more than perfect
mouth,

And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird

The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare—

Had you, with these the same, but brought
a mind ! ,

Some women do so. Had the mouth there
urged

“ God and the glory ! never care for gain.

The present by the future, what is that ?

Live for fame, side by side with Angelo—

Rafael is waiting. Up to God all three ! ”

I might have done it for you. So it seems—

Perhaps not. All is as God over-rules.

Beside, incentives come from the soul's self ;

The rest avail not. Why do I need you ?

What wife had Rafael, or has Angelo ?

In this world, who can do a thing, will not—

And who would do it, cannot, I perceive :

Yet the will's somewhat—somewhat, too,
the power—

And thus we half-men struggle. At the end,

God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.

'Tis safer for me, if the award be strict,

That I am something underrated here,

Poor this long while, despised, to speak the
truth.

I dared not, do you know, leave home all
day,

For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.

The best is when they pass and look aside ;

But they speak sometimes ; I must bear
it all.

Well may they speak ! That Francis, that
first time,

And that long festal year at Fontainebleau !
I surely then could sometimes leave the
ground,

Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,
In that humane great monarch's golden
look,—

One finger in his beard or twisted curl
Over his mouth's good mark that made the
smile,

One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,
The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,
You painting proudly with his breath on me,
All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,
Such frank French eyes, and such a fire
of souls

Profuse, my hand kept plying by those
hearts,—

And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,
This in the back-ground, waiting on my
work,

To crown the issue with a last reward !
A good time, was it not, my kingly days ?
And had you not grown restless—but I
know—

'Tis done and past ; 'twas right, my instinct
said ;

Too live the life grew, golden and not gray—
And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should
tempt

Out of the grange whose four walls make
his world.

How could it end in any other way?
You called me, and I came home to your
heart.

The triumph was to have ended there—then if
I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost?
Let my hands frame your face in your hair's
gold,

You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine!

“Rafael did this, Andrea painted that—
The Roman's is the better when you pray,
But still the other's Virgin was his wife—”

Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge
Both pictures in your presence; clearer grows
My better fortune, I resolve to think.

For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,
Said one day Angelo, his very self,
To Rafael . . . I have known it all these
years . . .

(When the young man was flaming out his
thoughts

Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,
Too lifted up in heart because of it)

“Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub
Goes up and down our Florence, none cares
how,

Who, were he set to plan and execute
As you are pricked on by your popes and
kings,

Would bring the sweat into that brow of
yours!”

To Rafael's!—And indeed the arm is wrong.

I hardly dare—yet, only you to see,
Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line
should go !

Ay, but the soul ! he's Rafael ! rub it out !
Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,
(What he ? why, who but Michael Angelo ?
Do you forget already words like those ?)
If really there was such a chance, so lost,
Is, whether you're—not grateful—but more
pleased.

Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed !
This hour has been an hour ! Another smile ?
If you would sit thus by me every night
I should work better, do you comprehend ?
I mean that I should earn more, give you
more.

See, it is settled dusk now ; there's a star ;
Morello's gone, the watch-lights shew the
wall,

The cue-owls speak the name we call them
by.

Come from the window, Love,—come in,
at last,

Inside the melancholy little house
We built to be so gay with. God is just.
King Francis may forgive me. Oft at nights
When I look up from painting, eyes tired out,
The walls become illumined, brick from brick
Distinct, instead of mortar fierce bright gold,
That gold of his I did cement them with !
Let us but love each other. Must you go ?

That Cousin here again? he waits outside?
Must see you—you, and not with me?

Those loans!

More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for
that?

Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to
spend?

While hand and eye and something of a
heart

Are left me, work's my ware, and what's it
worth?

I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit
The gray remainder of the evening out,
Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly
How I could paint were I but back in France,
One picture, just one more—the Virgin's face,
Not yours this time! I want you at my side
To hear them—that is, Michael Angelo—
Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.

Will you? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.
I take the subjects for his corridor,
Finish the portrait out of hand—there, there,
And throw him in another thing or two
If he demurs; the whole should prove enough
To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside,
What's better and what's all I care about,
Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff.

Love, does that please you? Ah, but what
does he,

The Cousin! what does he to please you
more?

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.
I regret little, I would change still less.
Since there my past life lies, why alter it?
The very wrong to Francis! it is true
I took his coin, was tempted and complied,
And built this house and sinned, and all
is said.

My father and my mother died of want,
Well, had I riches of my own? you see
How one gets rich! Let each one bear
his lot.

They were born poor, lived poor, and poor
they died:

And I have laboured somewhat in my
time

And not been paid profusely. Some good
son

Paint my two hundred pictures—let him
try!

No doubt, there's something strikes a
balance. Yes,

You loved me quite enough, it seems to-
night.

This must suffice me here. What would one
have?

In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more
chance—

Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,
Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
For Leonard, Rafael, Angelo and me
To cover—the three first without a wife,

While I have mine ! So—still they over-
 come
 Because there's still Lucrezia,—as I choose.
 Again the Cousin's whistle ! Go, my Love.

CLEON.

“ As certain also of your own poets have said ”—

CLEON the poet (from the sprinkled isles,
 Lily on lily, that o'erlace the sea,
 And laugh their pride when the light wave
 lisps “ Greece ”),—
 To Protus in his Tyranny : much health !

They give thy letter to me, even now :
 I read and seem as if I heard thee speak.
 The master of thy galley still unlades
 Gift after gift ; they block my court at last
 And pile themselves along its portico
 Royal with sunset, like a thought of thee :
 And one white she-slave from the group
 dispersed
 Of black and white slaves, (like the chequer-
 work
 Pavement, at once my nation's work and
 gift,
 Now covered with this settle-down of doves)
 One lyric woman, in her crocus vest

Woven of sea-wools, with her two white
hands

Commends to me the strainer and the cup
Thy lip hath bettered ere it blesses mine.

Well-counselled, king, in thy munificence !
For so shall men remark, in such an act
Of love for him whose song gives life its joy,
Thy recognition of the use of life ;
Nor call thy spirit barely adequate
To help on life in straight ways, broad
enough

For vulgar souls, by ruling and the rest.
Thou, in the daily building of thy tower,
Whether in fierce and sudden spasms of
toil,

Or through dim lulls of unapparent growth,
Or when the general work 'mid good acclaim
Climbed with the eye to cheer the architect,
Didst ne'er engage in work for mere work's
sake—

Hadst ever in thy heart the luring hope
Of some eventual rest a-top of it,
Whence, all the tumult of the building
hushed,

Thou first of men mightst look out to the
east.

The vulgar saw thy tower ; thou sawest
the sun.

For this, I promise on thy festival
To pour libation, looking o'er the sea,

Making this slave narrate thy fortunes,
 speak
 Thy great words, and describe thy royal
 face—
 Wishing thee wholly where Zeus lives the
 most
 Within the eventual element of calm.

Thy letter's first requirement meets me
 here.

It is as thou hast heard : in one short life
 I, Cleon, have effected all those things
 Thou wonderingly dost enumerate.
 That epos on thy hundred plates of gold
 Is mine—and also mine the little chaunt,
 So sure to rise from every fishing-bark
 When, lights at prow, the seamen haul their
 nets.

The image of the sun-god on the phare,
 Men turn from the sun's self to see, is mine ;
 The Pœcile, o'er-storied its whole length,
 As thou didst hear, with painting, is mine
 too.

I know the true proportions of a man
 And woman also, not observed before ;
 And I have written three books on the soul,
 Proving absurd all written hitherto,
 And putting us to ignorance again.
 For music,—why, I have combined the
 moods,
 Inventing one. In brief, all arts are mine ;

Thus much the people know and recognise,
Throughout our seventeen islands. Marvel
not.

We of these latter days, with greater mind
Than our forerunners, since more composite,
Look not so great (beside their simple way)
To a judge who only sees one way at once,
One mind-point, and no other at a time,—
Compares the small part of a man of us
With some whole man of the heroic age,
Great in his way,—not ours, nor meant for
ours,

And ours is greater, had we skill to know.
Yet, what we call this life of men on earth,
This sequence of the soul's achievements
here,

Being, as I find much reason to conceive,
Intended to be viewed eventually
As a great whole, not analysed to parts,
But each part having reference to all,—
How shall a certain part, pronounced complete,

Endure effacement by another part?
Was the thing done?—Then what's to do
again?

See, in the chequered pavement opposite,
Suppose the artist made a perfect rhomb,
And next a lozenge, then a trapezoid—
He did not overlay them, superimpose
The new upon the old and blot it out,
But laid them on a level in his work,

Making at last a picture ; there it lies.
So, first the perfect separate forms were
made,

The portions of mankind—and after, so,
Occurred the combination of the same.

Or where had been a progress, otherwise ?
Mankind, made up of all the single men,—
In such a synthesis the labour ends.

Now, mark me—those divine men of old time
Have reached, thou sayest well, each at one
point

The outside verge that rounds our faculty ;
And where they reached, who can do more
than reach ?

It takes but little water just to touch
At some one point the inside of a sphere,
And, as we turn the sphere, touch all the
rest

In due succession : but the finer air
Which not so palpably nor obviously,
Though no less universally, can touch
The whole circumference of that emptied
sphere,

Fills it more fully than the water did ;
Holds thrice the weight of water in itself
Resolved into a subtler element.

And yet the vulgar call the sphere first full
Up to the visible height—and after, void ;
Not knowing air's more hidden properties.

And thus our soul, misknown, cries out to
Zeus

To vindicate his purpose in its life—
Why stay we on the earth unless to grow?
Long since, I imaged, wrote the fiction out,
That he or other God, descended here
And, once for all, showed simultaneously
What, in its nature, never can be shown
Piecemeal or in succession ;—showed, I say.
The worth both absolute and relative
Of all His children from the birth of time,
His instruments for all appointed work.
I now go on to image,—might we hear
The judgment which should give the due to
each,
Show where the labour lay and where the
ease,
And prove Zeus' self, the latent, everywhere !
This is a dream. But no dream, let us hope,
That years and days, the summers and the
springs
Follow each other with unwaning powers—
The grapes which dye thy wine, are richer
far
Through culture, than the wild wealth of
the rock ;
The suave plum than the savage-tasted
drupe ;
The pastured honey-bee drops choicer sweet ;
The flowers turn double, and the leaves turn
flowers ;
That young and tender crescent-moon, thy
slave,

Sleeping upon her robe as if on clouds,
Refines upon the women of my youth.
What, and the soul alone deteriorates?
I have not chanted verse like Homer's, no—
Nor swept string like Terpander, no—nor
carved

And painted men like Phildias and his friend :
I am not great as they are, point by point :
But I have entered into sympathy
With these four, running these into one soul,
Who, separate, ignored each others' arts.
Say, is it nothing that I know them all?
The wild flower was the larger—I have
dashed

Rose-blood upon its petals, pricked its cup's
Honey with wine, and driven its seed to
fruit,

And show a better flower if not so large.
I stand, myself. Refer this to the gods
Whose gift alone it is ! which, shall I dare
(All pride apart) upon the absurd pretext
That such a gift by chance lay in my hand,
Discourse of lightly or depreciate?
It might have fallen to another's hand—what
then ?

I pass too surely—let at least truth stay !

And next, of what thou followest on to ask.
This being with me as I declare, O king,
My works, in all these varicoloured kinds,
So done by me, accepted so by men—

Thou askest if (my soul thus in men's hearts)
I must not be accounted to attain
The very crown and proper end of life.
Inquiring thence how, now life closeth up,
I face death with success in my right hand :
Whether I fear death less than dost thyself
The fortunate of men. " For " (writest thou)
" Thou leavest much behind, while I leave
nought :

Thy life stays in the poems men shall sing,
The pictures men shall study ; while my life,
Complete and whole now in its power and joy
Dies altogether with my brain and arm
Is lost indeed ; since,—what survives myself?
The brazen statue that o'erlooks my grave,
Set on the promontory which I named.
And that—some supple courtier of my heir
Shall use its robed and sceptred arm, perhaps,
To fix the rope to, which best drags it down.
I go, then : triumph thou, who dost not go !"

Nay, thou art worthy of hearing my whole
mind.

Is this apparent, when thou turn'st to muse
Upon the scheme of earth and man in chief,
That admiration grows as knowledge grows ?
That imperfection means perfection hid,
Reserved in part, to grace the aftertime ?
If, in the morning of philosophy,
Ere aught had been recorded, aught per-
ceived,

Thou, with the light now in thee, couldst
have looked

On all earth's tenantry, from worm to bird,
Ere man had yet appeared upon the stage—
Thou wouldst have seen them perfect, and
deduced

The perfectness of others yet unseen.
Conceding which,—had Zeus then questioned
thee

“Wilt thou go on a step, improve on this,
Do more for visible creatures than is done?”
Thou wouldst have answered, “Ay, by
making each

Grow conscious in himself—by that alone.
All's perfect else: the shell sucks fast the
rock,

The fish strikes through the sea, the snake
both swims

And slides; the birds take flight, forth range
the beasts,

Till life's mechanics can no further go—

And all this joy in natural life is put
Like fire from off Thy finger into each,
So exquisitely perfect is the same.

But 'tis pure fire—and they mere matter are;
It has them, not they it: and so I choose,
For man, Thy last premeditated work
(If I might add a glory to this scheme)

That a third thing should stand apart from
both,

A quality arise within the soul,

Which, intro-active, made to supervise
And feel the force it has, may view itself,
And so be happy." Man might live at first
The animal life: but is there nothing more?
In due time, let him critically learn
How he lives; and, the more he gets to
 know
Of his own life's adaptabilities,
The more joy-giving will his life become.
The man who hath this quality, is best.

But thou, king, hadst more reasonably
 said:
"Let progress end at once,—man make no
 step
Beyond the natural man, the better beast,
Using his senses, not the sense of sense."
In man there's failure, only since he left
The lower and unconscious forms of life.
We called it an advance, the rendering plain
A spirit might grow conscious of that life,
And, by new lore so added to the old,
Take each step higher over the brute's head.
This grew the only life, the pleasure-house,
Watch-tower and treasure-fortress of the
 soul,
Which whole surrounding flats of natural
 life
Seemed only fit to yield subsistence to;
A tower that crowns a country. But, alas!
The soul now climbs it just to perish there,

For thence we have discovered ('tis no dream—

We know this, which we had not else perceived)

That there's a world of capability

For joy, spread round about us, meant for us,

Inviting us ; and still the soul craves all,

And still the flesh replies, "Take no jot more

Than ere you climbed the tower to look abroad!

Nay, so much less, as that fatigue has brought

Deduction to it." We struggle—fain to enlarge

Our bounded physical recipiency,

Increase our power, supply fresh oil to life,

Repair the waste of age and sickness. No,

It skills not : life's inadequate to joy,

As the soul sees joy, tempting life to take.

They praise a fountain in my garden here

Wherein a Naiad sends the water-spurt

Thin from her tube ; she smiles to see it rise.

What if I told her, it is just a thread

From that great river which the hills shut up,

And mock her with my leave to take the same?

The artificer has given her one small tube

Past power to widen or exchange—what boots

To know she might spout oceans it she
could?

She cannot lift beyond her first straight
thread,

And so a man can use but a man's joy
While he sees God's. Is it for Zeus to
boast,

"See, man, how happy I live, and despair—
That I may be still happier—for thy use!"

If this were so, we could not thank our
Lord,

As hearts beat on to doing: 'tis not so—

Malice it is not. Is it carelessness?

Still, no. If care—where is the sign, I ask—

And get no answer: and agree in sum,

O king, with thy profound discouragement,

Who seest the wider but to sigh the more.

Most progress is most failure! thou sayest
well.

The last point now:—thou dost except a
case—

Holding joy not impossible to one

With artist-gifts—to such a man as I—

Who leave behind me living works indeed;

For, such a poem, such a painting lives.

What? dost thou verily trip upon a word,

Confound the accurate view of what joy is

(Caught somewhat clearer by my eyes than
thine)

With feeling joy? confound the knowing how

And showing how to live (my faculty)
With actually living?—Otherwise
Where is the artist's vantage o'er the king?
Because in my great epos I display
How divers men young, strong, fair, wise,
can act—

Is this as though I acted? if I paint,
Carve the young Phœbus, am I therefore
young?

Methinks I'm older that I bowed myself
The many years of pain that taught me art!
Indeed, to know is something, and to prove
How all this beauty might be enjoyed, is
more:

But, knowing nought, to enjoy is something
too.

Yon rower with the moulded muscles there
Lowering the sail, is nearer it than I.
I can write love-odes—thy fair slave's an ode.
I get to sing of love, when grown too gray
For being beloved: she turns to that young
man,

The muscles all a-ripple on his back.

I know the joy of kingship: well—thou art
king!

“But,” sayest thou—(and I marvel, I repeat,
To find thee tripping on a mere word) “what
Thou writest, paintest, stays: that does not
die:

Sappho survives, because we sing her songs,

And Æschylus, because we read his plays!"
Why, if they live still, let them come and
take

Thy slave in my despite—drink from thy
cup—

Speak in my place. Thou diest while I
survive?

Say rather that my fate is deadlier still,—
In this, that every day my sense of joy
Grows more acute, my soul (intensified
In power and insight) more enlarged, more
keen;

While every day my hairs fall more and
more,

My hand shakes, and the heavy years
increase—

The horror quickening still from year to
year,

The consummation coming past escape
When I shall know most, and yet least
enjoy—

When all my works wherein I prove my
worth,

Being present still to mock me in men's
mouths,

Alive still, in the phrase of such as thou,
I, I, the feeling, thinking, acting man,
The man who loved his life so over much,
Shall sleep in my urn. It is so horrible,
I dare at times imagine to my need
Some future state revealed to us by Zeus,

Unlimited in capability
For joy, as this is in desire for joy,
To seek which, the joy-hunger forces us.
That, stung by straitness of our life, made
 strait

On purpose to make sweet the life at large—
Freed by the throbbing impulse we call
 death,

We burst there as the worm into the fly,
Who, while a worm still, wants his wings.
 But no !

Zeus has not yet revealed it ; and alas !
He must have done so—were it possible !

Live long and happy, and in that thought
 die,
Glad for what was. Farewell. And for the
 rest,

I cannot tell thy messenger aright
Where to deliver what he bears of thine
To one called Paulus—we have heard his
 fame

Indeed, if Christos be not one with him—
I know not, nor am troubled much to
 know.

Thou canst not think a mere barbarian Jew,
As Paulus proves to be, one circumcised,
Hath access to a secret shut from us ?
Thou wrongest our philosophy, O king,
In stooping to inquire of such an one.
As if his answer could impose at all.

He writeth, doth he? well, and he may write.
Oh, the Jew findeth scholars! certain slaves
Who touched on this same isle, preached
him and Christ;
And (as I gathered from a bystander)
Their doctrines could be held by no sane man.

JAMES LEE'S WIFE.

I.—JAMES LEE'S WIFE SPEAKS AT THE
WINDOW.

I.

AH, Love, but a day
And the world has changed!
The sun's away,
And the bird estranged;
The wind has dropped,
And the sky's deranged:
Summer has stopped.

II.

Look in my eyes!
Wilt thou change too?
Should I fear surprise?
Shall I find aught new
In the old and dear,
In the good and true,
With the changing year?

III.

Thou art a man,
But I am thy love.
For the lake, its swan ;
For the dell, its dove ;
And for thee—(oh, haste !)
Me to bend above,
Me, to hold embraced.

II.—BY THE FIRESIDE.

I.

Is all our fire of shipwreck wood,
Oak and pine ?
Oh, for the ills half-understood,
The dim dead woe
Long ago
Befallen this bitter coast of France !
Well, poor sailors took their chance ;
I take mine.

II.

A ruddy shaft our fire must shoot
O'er the sea :
Do sailors eye the casement—mute,
Drenched and stark,
From their bark—
And envy, gnash their teeth for hate
O' the warm safe house and happy freight
—Thee and me ?

III.

God help you, sailors, at your need !
Spare the curse !
For some ships, safe in port indeed,
Rot and rust,
Run to dust,
All through worms i' the wood, which crept,
Gnawed our hearts out while we slept :
That is worse.

IV.

Who lived here before us two ?
Old-world pairs.
Did a woman ever—would I knew !—
Watch the man
With whom began
Love's voyage full-sail,—(now, gnash your
teeth !)
When planks start, open hell beneath
Unawares ?

III.—IN THE DOORWAY.

I.

THE swallow has set her six young on the
rail,
And looks seaward :
The water's in stripes like a snake, olive-pale
To the leeward,—

On the weather-side, black, spotted white
with the wind.

"Good fortune departs, and disaster's behind,"—

Hark, the wind with its wants and its
infinite wail!

II.

Our fig-tree, that leaned for the saltness,
has furled

Her five fingers,

Each leaf like a hand opened wide to the world

Where there lingers

No glint of the gold, Summer sent for her
sake:

How the vines writhe in rows, each impaled
on its stake!

My heart shrivels up and my spirit shrinks
curled.

III.

Yet here are we two; we have love, house
enough,

With the field there,

This house of four rooms, that field red and
rough,

Though it yield there,

For the rabbit that robs, scarce a blade or a
bent;

If a magpie alight now, it seems an event;

And they both will be gone at November's
rebuff.

IV.

But why must cold spread? but wherefore
bring change
To the spirit,
God meant should mate his with an infinite
range,
And inherit
His power to put life in the darkness and
cold?
Oh, live and love worthily, bear and be
bold!
Whom Summer made friends of, let Winter
estrangle!

IV.—ALONG THE BEACH.

I.

I WILL be quiet and talk with you,
And reason why you are wrong.
You wanted my love—is that much true?
And so I did love, so I do:
What has come of it all along?

II.

I took you—how could I otherwise?
For a world to me, and more;
For all, love greatens and glorifies
Till God's a-glow, to the loving eyes,
In what was mere earth before.

III.

Yes, earth—yes, mere ignoble earth !
Now do I mis-state, mistake ?
Do I wrong your weakness and call it worth ?
Expect all harvest, dread no dearth,
Seal my sense up for your sake ?

IV.

Oh, Love, Love, no, Love ! not so, indeed !
You were just weak earth, I knew :
With much in you waste, with many a weed,
And plenty of passions run to seed,
But a little good grain too.

V.

And such as you were, I took you for mine :
Did not you find me yours,
To watch the olive and wait the vine,
And wonder when rivers of oil and wine
Would flow, as the Book assures ?

VI.

Well, and if none of these good things came,
What did the failure prove ?
The man was my whole world, all the same,
With his flowers to praise or his weeds to
blame,
And, either or both, to love.

VII.

Yet this turns now to a fault—there ! there !
That I do love, watch too long,

And wait too well, and weary and wear ;
And 'tis all an old story, and my despair
Fit subject for some new song :

VIII.

“How the light, light love, he has wings
to fly
“At suspicion of a bond :
“My wisdom has bidden your pleasure good-
bye,
“Which will turn up next in a laughing eye,
“And why should you look beyond ?”

V.—ON THE CLIFF.

I.

I LEANED on the turf,
I looked at a rock
Left dry by the surf ;
For the turf, to call it grass were to mock :
Dead to the roots, so deep was done
The work of the summer sun.

II.

And the rock lay flat
As an anvil's face :
No iron like that !
Baked dry ; of a weed, of a shell, no trace :
Sunshine outside, but ice at the core,
Death's altar by the lone shore.

III.

On the turf, sprang gay
With his films of blue,
No cricket, I'll say,
But a warhorse, barded and chanfroned too,
The gift of a quixote-mage to his knight,
Real fairy, with wings all right.

IV.

On the rock, they scorch
Like a drop of fire
From a brandished torch,
Fall two red fans of a butterfly :
No turf, no rock : in their ugly stead,
See, wonderful blue and red !

V.

Is it not so
With the minds of men ?
The level and low,
The burnt and bare, in themselves ; but then
With such a blue and red grace, not theirs,—
Love settling unawares !

VI.—READING A BOOK, UNDER THE CLIFF.

I.

“STILL ailing, Wind ? Wilt be appeased or
no ?
“Which needs the other's office, thou or I ?

"Dost want to be disburthened of a woe,
"And can, in truth, my voice untie
"Its links, and let it go?

II.

"Art thou a dumb wronged thing that would
be righted,
"Entrusting thus thy cause to me? For-
bear!
"No tongue can mend such pleadings; faith,
requited
"With falsehood,—love, at last aware
"Of scorn,—hopes, early blighted,—

III.

"We have them; but I know not any tone
"So fit as thine to falter forth a sorrow:
"Dost think men would go mad without a
moan,
"If they knew any way to borrow
"A pathos like thy own?

IV.

"Which sigh wouldst mock, of all the sighs?
The one
"So long escaping from lips starved and
blue,
"That lasts while on her pallet-bed the nun
"Stretches her length; her foot comes
through
"The straw she shivers on;

V.

"You had not thought she was so tall : and
spent,
"Her shrunk lids open, her lean fingers
shut
"Close, close, their sharp and livid nails
indent
"The clammy palm ; then all is mute :
"That way, the spirit went.

VI.

"Or wouldst thou rather that I understand
"Thy will to help me?—like the dog I
found
"Once, pacing sad this solitary strand,
"Who would not take my food, poor
hound,
"But whined and licked my hand."

VII.

All this, and more, comes from some young
man's pride
Of power to see,—in failure and mistake,
Relinquishment, disgrace, on every side,—
Merely examples for his sake,
Helps to his path untried :

VIII.

Instances he must—simply recognise?
Oh, more than so !—must, with a learner's
zeal,

Make doubly prominent, twice emphasise,
By added touches that reveal
The god in babe's disguise.

IX.

Oh, he knows what defeat means, and the
rest !

Himself the undefeated that shall be :
Failure, disgrace, he flings them you to test,—
His triumph, in eternity
Too plainly manifest !

X.

Whence, judge if he learn forthwith what
the wind
Means in its moaning—by the happy
prompt
Instinctive way of youth, I mean ; for kind
Calm years, exacting their accopt
Of pain, mature the mind :

XI.

And some midsummer morning, at the lull
Just about daybreak, as he looks across
A sparkling foreign country, wonderful
To the sea's edge for gloom and gloss,
Next minute must annul,—

XII.

Then, when the wind begins among the vines
So low, so low, what shall it say but this ?

"Here is the change beginning, here the
lines
"Circumscribe beauty, set to bliss
"The limit time assigns."

XIII.

Nothing can be as it has been before ;
Better, so call it, only not the same.
To draw one beauty into our hearts' core,
And keep it changeless ! such our claim ;
So answered,—Never more !

XIV.

Simple? Why this is the old woe o' the
world ;
Tune, to whose rise and fall we live and
die.
Rise with it, then ! Rejoice that man is
hurled
From change to change unceasingly,
His soul's wings never furled !

XV.

That's a new question ; still replies the fact,
Nothing endures : the wind moans, saying
so ;
We moan in acquiescence : there's life's pact,
Perhaps probation—do I know ?
God does : endure his act !

XVI.

Only, for man, how bitter not to grave
On his soul's hands' palms one fair good
wise thing
Just as he grasped it ! For himself, death's
wave ;
While time first washes—ah, the sting !—
O'er all he'd sink to save.

VII.—AMONG THE ROCKS.

I.

OH, good gigantic smile o' the brown old earth,
This autumn morning ! How he sets his
bones
To bask i' the sun, and thrusts out knees
and feet
For the ripple to run over in its mirth ;
Listening the while, where on the heap of
stones
The white breast of the sea-lark twitters
sweet.

II.

That is the doctrine, simple, ancient, true ;
Such is life's trial, as old earth smiles and
knows.
If you loved only what were worth your love,
Love were clear gain, and wholly well for you :
Make the low nature better by your throes !
Give earth yourself, go up for gain above !

VIII.—BESIDE THE DRAWING BOARD.

I.

“As like as a Hand to another Hand !”

Whoever said that foolish thing,
Could not have studied to understand
The counsels of God in fashioning,
Out of the infinite love of his heart,
This Hand, whose beauty I praise, apart
From the world of wonder left to praise,
If I tried to learn the other ways
Of love in its skill, or love in its power.

“As like as a Hand to another Hand” :

Who said that, never took his stand,
Found and followed, like me, an hour,
The beauty in this,—how free, how fine
To fear, almost,—of the limit-line !
As I looked at this, and learned and drew,

Drew and learned, and looked again,
While fast the happy minutes flew,
Its beauty mounted into my brain,
And a fancy seized me ; I was fain
To efface my work, begin anew,
Kiss what before I only drew ;
Ay, laying the red chalk 'twixt my lips,
With soul to help if the mere lips failed,
I kissed all right where the drawing ailed,
Kissed fast the grace that somehow slips
Still from one's soulless finger-tips.

II.

'Tis a clay cast, the perfect thing,
From Hand live once, dead long ago :
Princess-like it wears the ring
To fancy's eye, by which we know
That here at length a master found
His match, a proud lone soul its mate,
As soaring genius sank to ground,
And pencil could not emulate
The beauty in this,—how free, how fine
To fear almost !—of the limit-line.
Long ago the god, like me
The worm, learned, each in our degree :
Looked and loved, learned and drew,
Drew and learned and loved again,
While fast the happy minutes flew,
Till beauty mounted into his brain
And on the finger which outvied
His art he placed the ring that's there,
Still by fancy's eye descried,
In token of a marriage rare :
For him on earth, his art's despair,
For him in heaven, his soul's fit bride.

III.

Little girl with the poor coarse hand
I turned from to a cold clay cast—
I have my lesson, understand
The worth of flesh and blood at last.
Nothing but beauty in a Hand ?

Because he could not change the hue,
Mend the lines and make them true
To this which met his soul's demand,—
Would Da Vinci turn from you?
I hear him laugh my woes to scorn—
“The fool forsooth is all forlorn
“Because the beauty, she thinks best,
“Lived long ago or was never born,—
“Because no beauty bears the test
“In this rough peasant Hand! Confessed!
“‘Art is null and study void!’
“So sayest thou? So said not I,
“Who threw the faulty pencil by,
“And years instead of hours employed,
“Learning the veritable use
“Of flesh and bone and nerve beneath
“Lines and hue of the outer sheath,
“If haply I might reproduce
“One motive of the powers profuse,
“Flesh and bone and nerve that make
“The poorest coarsest human hand
“An object worthy to be scanned
“A whole life long for their sole sake.
“Shall earth and the cramped moment-space
“Yield the heavenly crowning grace?
“Now the parts and then the whole!
“Who art thou, with stunted soul
“And stunted body, thus to cry
“‘I love,—shall that be life's strait dole?’
“‘I must live beloved or die!’

"This peasant hand that spins the wool
"And bakes the bread, why lives it on,
"Poor and coarse with beauty gone,—
"What use survives the beauty?" Food!

Go, little girl with the poor coarse hand!
I have my lesson, shall understand.

IX.—ON DECK.

I.

THERE is nothing to remember in me,
Nothing I ever said with a grace,
Nothing I did that you care to see,
Nothing I was that deserves a place
In your mind, now I leave you, set you free.

II.

Conceded! In turn, concede to me,
Such things have been as a mutual flame.
Your soul's locked fast; but, love for a key,
You might let it loose, till I grew the
same
In your eyes, as in mine you stand: strange
plea!

III.

For then, then, what would it matter to me
That I was the harsh ill-favoured one?
We both should be like as pea and pea;
It was ever so since the world begun:
So, let me proceed with my reverie.

IV.

How strange it were if you had all me,
As I have all you in my heart and
brain,
You, whose 'least word brought gloom or
glee,
Who never lifted the hand in vain—
Will hold mine yet, from over the sea !

V.

Strange, if a face, when you thought of me,
Rose like your own face present now,
With eyes as dear in their due degree,
Much such a mouth, and as bright a
brow,
Till you saw yourself, while you cried "'Tis
She !"

VI.

Well, you may; you must, set down to me
Love that was life, life that was love ;
A tenure of breath at your lips' decree,
A passion to stand as your thoughts
approve,
A rapture to fall where your foot might be.

VII.

But did one touch of such love for me
Come in a word or a look of yours,

Whose words and looks will, circling, flee
Round me and round while life endures,—
Could I fancy “As I feel, thus feels he”;

VIII.

Why, fade you might to a thing like me,
And your hair grow these coarse hanks of
hair,
Your skin, this bark of a gnarled tree,—
You might turn myself!—should I know
or care
When I should be dead of joy, James Lee?

ONE WAY OF LOVE.

I.

ALL June I bound the rose in sheaves.
Now, rose by rose, I strip the leaves.
And strew them where Pauline may pass.
She will not turn aside? Alas!
Let them lie. Suppose they die?
The chance was they might take her eye.

II.

How many a month I strove to suit
These stubborn fingers to the lute!
To-day I venture all I know.
She will not hear my music? So!

Break the string—fold music's wing.
Suppose Pauline had bade me sing!

III.

My whole life long I learned to love.
This hour my utmost art I prove
And speak my passion—heaven or hell?
She will not give me heaven? 'Tis well!
Lose who may—I still can say,
Those who win heaven, blest are they.

ANOTHER WAY OF LOVE.

I.

JUNE was not over,
Though past the full,
And the best of her roses
Had yet to blow,
When a man I know
(But shall not discover,
Since ears are dull,
And time discloses)
Turned him and said with a man's true air,
Half sighing a smile in a yawn, as 'twere,—
“If I tire of your June, will she greatly
care?”

II.

Well, Dear, in-doors with you!
True, serene deadness
Tries a man's temper.

What's in the blossom
June wears on her bosom?
Can it clear scores with you?
Sweetness and redness.

Eadem semper!

Go, let me care for it greatly or slightly!
If June mends her bowers now, your hand
left unsightly
By plucking their roses,—my June will do
rightly.

III.

And after, for pastime,
If June be refulgent
With flowers in completeness,
All petals, no prickles,
Delicious as trickles
Of wine poured at mass-time,—
And choose One indulgent
To redness and sweetness:
Or if, with experience of man and of
spider,
She use my June-lightning, the strong insect-
ridder,
To stop the fresh spinning,—why, June will
consider.

MISCONCEPTIONS.

I.

THIS is a spray the Bird clung to,
Making it blossom with pleasure,
Ere the high tree-top she sprung to,
Fit for her nest and her treasure.
Oh, what a hope beyond measure
Was the poor spray's, which the flying feet
hung to,—
So to be singled out, built in, and sung to !

II.

THIS is a heart the Queen leant on,
Thrilled in a minute erratic,
Ere the true bosom she bent on,
Meet for love's regal dalmatic.
Oh, what a fancy ecstatic
Was the poor heart's, ere the wanderer went
on—
Love to be saved for it, proffered to, spent
on !

MAY AND DEATH.

I.

I WISH that when you died last May,
Charles, there had died along with you
Three parts of spring's delightful things ;
Ay, and, for me, the fourth part too.

II.

A foolish thought, and worse, perhaps !
There must be many a pair of friends
Who, arm in arm, deserve the warm
Moon-births and the long evening-ends.

III.

So, for their sake, be May still May !
Let their new time, as mine of old,
Do all it did for me : I bid
Sweet sights and sounds throng manifold.

IV.

Only, one little sight, one plant,
Woods have in May, that starts up green
Save a sole streak which, so to speak,
Is spring's blood, spilt its leaves between,—

V.

That, they might spare ; a certain wood
Might miss the plant ; their loss were
small :
But I,—whene'er the leaf grows there,
Its drop comes from my heart, that's all.

PROSPICE.

FEAR death?—to feel the fog in my throat,
 The mist in my face,
When the snows begin, and the blasts
 denote
 I am nearing the place,
The power of the night, the press of the
 storm,
 The post of the foe ;
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible
 form,
 Yet the strong man must go :
For the journey is done and the summit
 attained,
 And the barriers fall,
Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon
 be gained,
 The reward of it all.
I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
 The best and the last !
I would hate that death bandaged my eyes
 and forbore,
 And bade me creep past.
No ! let me taste the whole of it, fare like
 my peers
 The heroes of old,
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's
 arrears
 Of pain, darkness and cold.

For sudden the worst turns the best to the
brave,

 The black minute's at end,
And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that
rave,

 Shall dwindle, shall blend,
Shall change, shall become first a peace out
of pain,

 Then a light, then thy breast,
O thou soul of my soul ! I shall clasp thee
again,

 And with God be the rest !

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